THE MAKING OF *RISKY BUSINESS* | PHOTO ESSAY: A CITY UNDER SIEGE

CHICAGO

DECEMBER 2025

Featuring

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A GOOD SAMARITAN,
THE LEO HIGH SCHOOL CHOIR …

CHICAGOANS OF THE YEAR

AND
A CERTAIN
HOMEGROWN
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O'HARE AND MIDWAY

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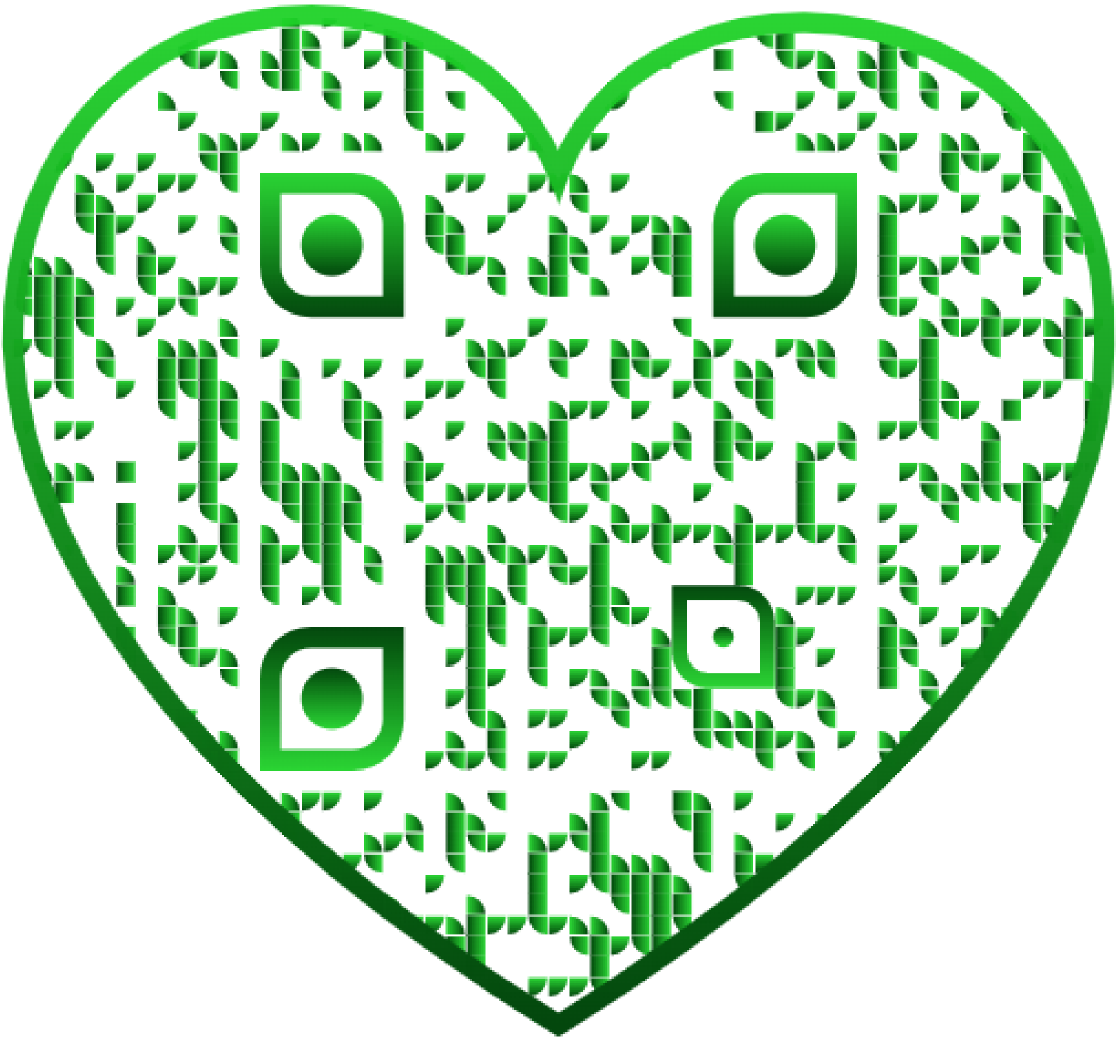

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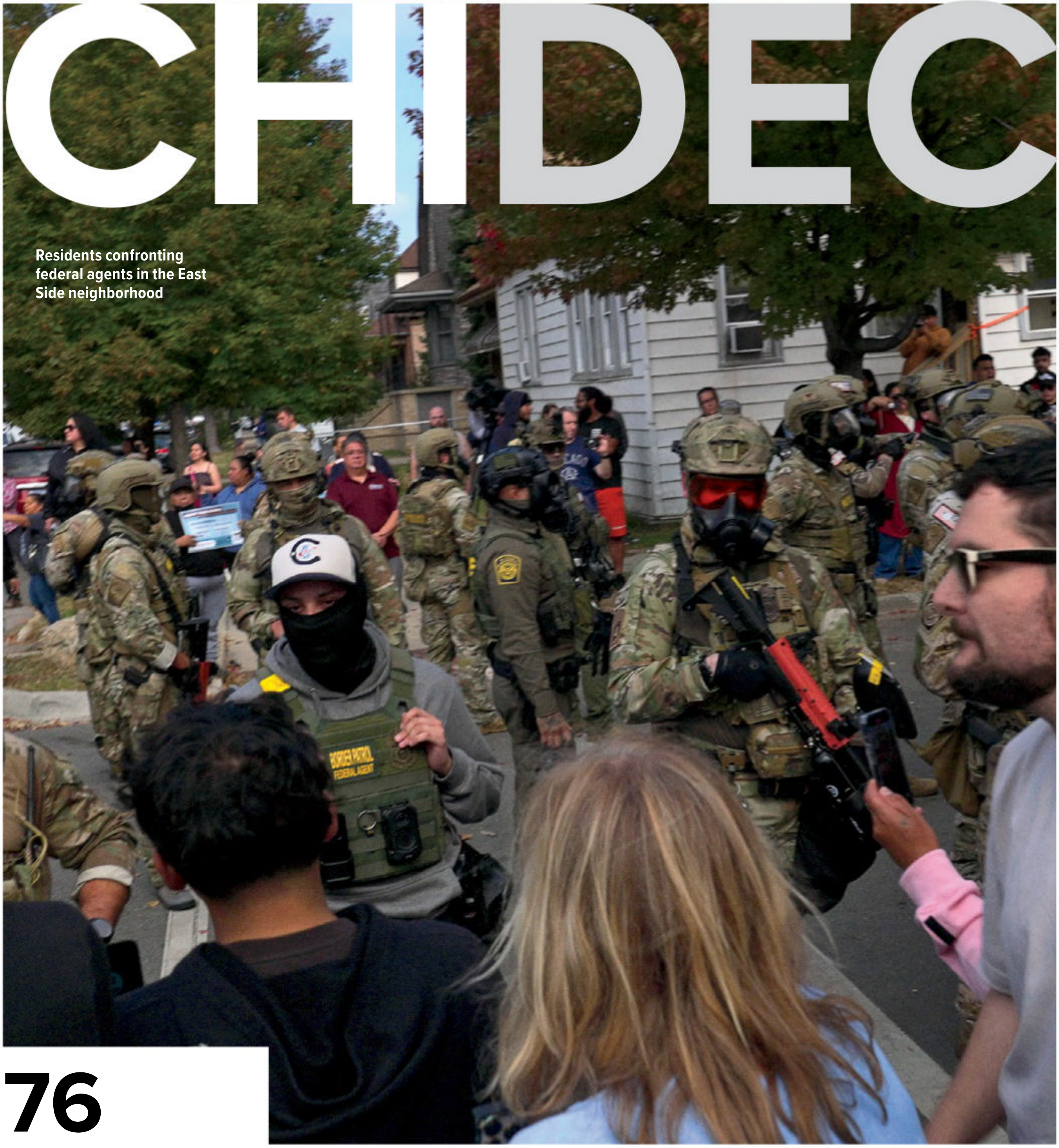
FEATURES



Residents confronting federal agents in the East Side neighborhood

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Scenes From the Occupation

As the feds cracked down on immigration in Chicago this fall, **Carlos Javier Ortiz**'s camera was rolling. His stills show a city in crisis — and a city defiant.

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From everyone's favorite high school choir to a certain Holy Father, these honorees brought pride to this city in a tumultuous time.

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By Jake Malooley

Photograph by CARLOS JAVIER ORTIZ

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ON THE COVER PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY CLAYTON HAUCK AND DAVE RENTAUSKAS

PHOTOGRAPHY: (PORTRAIT) LYNDON FRENCH; (MUG) CLINT BLOWERS; (COOKBOOK) HOOSIER MAMA; (FOOD) JACLYN RIVAS | STYLING: (COVER) MEG HASTINGS

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SENIOR ACCOUNT MANAGERS
Patti Augustyn
Valeria Coric
Jacqueline Simon

REGIONAL SALES REPRESENTATIVES

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justinnakaahiki@dmhawaii.com

Michigan
Regional Manager
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jhesswahl@comcast.net

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917-679-5506
cynthia@donahermedia.com

Southeast U.S.
Account Director
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954-493-7311
whitney.ford@gmail.com

Western U.S.
SHANA WONG SOLARES
808-386-0872
shanawong@me.com

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RaMeka Johnson
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FROM THE EDITOR

A Cruel, Cruel Fall

↑ Carlos Javier Ortiz

CINEMATOGRAPHER AND PHOTOGRAPHER CARLOS JAVIER Ortiz had been working on a film about Chicago's recent influx of immigrants – how these newcomers are making a home for themselves in difficult circumstances – when Operation Midway Blitz began here this fall. With hundreds of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and Border Patrol agents arriving in Chicago, detaining people, and clashing with residents, Ortiz did what any good documentarian would do: He grabbed his camera.

Ortiz managed to capture some of the deployment's most dramatic moments: the aftermath of a raid on a South Shore apartment building, a tense confrontation between federal agents and East Side residents, clashes between protesters and officers outside the Broadview processing center. For "Scenes From the Occupation" (page 76), we asked Ortiz to share with us select stills, along with his impressions. The shots are breathtaking and otherworldly – images of what would once have seemed unfathomable here.

"People like myself and others I know feel like there's a better way of doing this," Ortiz says of the crackdown. "It's almost cruel on purpose." But Ortiz, who was born in Puerto Rico and grew up in Chicago, is heartened by the response from people across the city. "They're out protesting. They're organizing communally. Chicago gets this reputation of the most segregated city, so it's amazing seeing other Chicagoans standing up."

Terrance Noland
Editor in Chief

INSIDE PEEK

Good Vibrations

PHOTOGRAPHING THE LEO HIGH SCHOOL choir for "Chicagoans of the Year" (page 50), Clayton Hauck and *Chicago* photo director Jaclyn Rivas witnessed firsthand just how popular the boys have become from their run on *America's Got Talent*. People driving by honked and cheered out their windows. "The neighborhood is really proud of these kids," Hauck says. "Seeing that support was really cool." During the shoot, Rivas put on some music, hoping to loosen up the group. It worked: The students started performing songs they sang on the show, like Fall Out Boy's "Centuries." Says Rivas, "It was like our own free concert." At the end of the shoot, the choir crooned some Christmas carols. The perfect way to ring in our December issue. –MADISON ROTH

POETIC JUSTICE

For text to accompany Carlos Javier Ortiz's images of the federal immigration blitz, *Chicago* commissioned **José Olivarez** to write a poem. The son of Mexican immigrants, Olivarez, whose 2023 collection was longlisted for a National Book Award, now lives in New Jersey but was born in Calumet City and spent many years in Chicago. Inspiration for "when we win" (page 82) struck him while he was back in town, riding the L, listening to an organizer say on a podcast, "We keep each other safe." –M.R.

PHOTOGRAPHY: (NOLAND) MICHAEL ZAJAKOWSKI; (ORTIZ) ALYCE HENSON; (CHOIR) JACLYN RIVAS; (OLIVAREZ) MERCEDES ZAPATA

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TALK TO US

Free Durk. He's a good dude overall.

Dewayne Brandon
via LinkedIn

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Durk's Downfall

Great article ["The Tragedy of Lil Durk," October]. Complicated character. The author points to Durk recently marrying his longtime girlfriend as a positive step, which it is, but then notes that she is the mother of one of his *eight* kids. **@CD44_** ***via X***

I love that this guy's whole persona is "My dad told me …" **@djmorrisonster** ***via Instagram***

Here's you mythologizing him. **@Bobbbe11** ***via Instagram***

TWEEDY STAN
That is a great photo ["Jeff Tweedy Just Wants to Let His Light Shine," October]. Keep making great music, Mr. Tweedy. **@jasonswearingen** ***via Instagram***

TAKING A STAND
Thank you, National Immigrant Justice Center, for all you do ["The ICE Men Cometh," October]. We care about our neighbors here. **@cygneteventsanddesign** ***via Instagram***

Thank you to [Mary Meg] McCarthy and all true patriots who still believe that "defending immigrants' rights is a fight to preserve America's rule of law." **Magdalena García** ***via Facebook***

POLITICAL HISTORY
We're here for whatever Dominic Pacyga writes ["The Birth and Death of the Machine," October]! **@chicollections.bsky.social** ***via Bluesky***

A BEEFY REVIEW
Love [the Alston's] fries ["Living Large," October]! **@dyltrot** ***via Instagram***

POP-UP FANS
Seriously, [Cash's Kitchen] has the best burger in Chicago ["Fleeting Flavors," October]. **@ryan_the_overlord** ***via Instagram***

WHERE TO FIND US

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■ Check out the latest episodes of *Dish*, our dining podcast, at **chicagomag.com/dishpodcast**.

Q:

Why are there so many Old Style signs in Chicago?

CITY OF BIG QUESTIONS

ANSWERED BY EDWARD McCLELLAND

Old Style, brewed since 1902 in Wisconsin, has been closely associated with Chicago since 1950, when it became the official beer of the Cubs, sold by Wrigley Field vendors. Then, in the 1970s, Old Style's salesmen began offering lighted signs to local taverns, whose owners were thrilled to have a glowing advertisement for a well-liked beer. The beverage's popularity increased here in 1976, after Budweiser brewers went on strike, leaving Old Style one of the only available cheap beers. As the brand tried to expand beyond the Midwest in the 1990s, a series of TV ads starring quintessential Chicago actor Dennis Farina mocked New Yorkers and Angelenos trying to glom on to Old Style: "It's our great beer, and they can't have it."

Old Style, which controlled a third of the local market in the 1980s, isn't as popular here as it used to be. (Budweiser took its place as the Cubs' official beer in 2014.) Still, the Old Style sign remains as a symbol of a classic Chicago tavern, labeled "Cerveza Fría" in Latino neighborhoods and "Zimne Piwo" on the Polish Northwest Side. The Old Style Bar Project has documented hundreds of Chicago-area signs on its website, out of the 2,000 installed throughout the Midwest. We may not drink as much Old Style as we once did, but no other beer is so beloved.

Send your questions about the Chicago area to emcclelland@chicagomag.com.

PHOTOGRAPH: JACLYN RIVAS | ILLUSTRATION: GREG CLARKE

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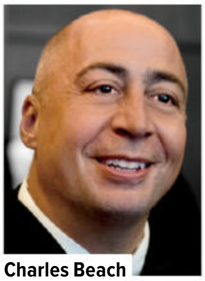

Charles Beach

Talking Points

This month's essential cocktail party fodder

1 Cook County gets its first new chief judge in 24 years when **Charles Beach** takes over for Timothy Evans Dec. 1. Voted out by the circuit court's judges, Evans had been an outspoken supporter of criminal justice reforms.

2 Chicago could have the coldest, snowiest winter in a decade, thanks to a Pacific warming phenomenon called **the Blob**. It pushes the jet stream north in the Arctic, causing it to dip over the upper Midwest.

3 A new **city budget** is due by month's end. Mayor Johnson has a $1.19 billion hole to fill. He'll be raising someone's taxes, but whose? He's proposing hitting businesses with $617 million in various new fees.

4 Dec. 13 marks the 100th birthday of Danville native **Dick Van Dyke**. A new documentary about him drops that weekend. It'll premiere at his hometown's Fischer Theatre a week earlier. Don't trip over the furniture to get there.

PHOTOGRAPH: (BEACH) COURTESY OF HIS CAMPAIGN

The Vanishing Mayor

With Chicago now on its second consecutive weak leader, the City Council is growing in power. By EDWARD McCLELLAND

IT WAS HIGH NOON AT CITY HALL ON SEPTEMBER 25. THE CITY COUNCIL MEETING was supposed to have started an hour earlier, but impatient alders were cooling their heels. Mayor Brandon Johnson was still in his fifth-floor office, trying to hash out a new slate of committee chairs with the Black and Latino caucuses. He couldn't get a deal done. "This is the most inept mayor I've ever seen," one alderperson grumbled at the time.

Traditionally, Chicago mayors have been able to dictate the chairs of City Council committees. But the days of domineering mayors, which date back to the rule of Richard J. Daley, seem to have come to an end. Thanks to two consecutive weak, politically inexperienced mayors – Johnson

Illustration by TIM BOUCKLEY

and Lori Lightfoot – the council has been clawing back power it lost long ago and operating more as a coequal branch of government than a rubber stamp.

The committee chairs fiasco isn't the only time Johnson has had to deal with defiant alders. Last year, they voted 50–0 against his plan for a $300 million property tax increase. This June, they passed a snap curfew he opposed, leading to the first mayoral veto in 19 years. His 2024 budget barely made it through the council, 27–23, a big change from the years when budgets passed with only one or two dissents. And when Johnson canceled the city's contract for the gunshot detection system ShotSpotter, the council voted 33–14 to overturn his decision. Since it was an executive matter, he was not bound by the vote, but it was another sign that the council wasn't going to simply abide by his wishes.

> **"[Johnson] doesn't have control of the room. I would say there's a permanent shift, but that doesn't mean a future mayor can't get consensus."**
>
> *–Alderperson Scott Waguespack*

It's not just that Johnson lacks political savvy. He also lacks the tools that past mayors used to bend the council to their will: patronage and money. "The old political machine under Richard J. Daley, and later Richard M. Daley, has broken down," says Dick Simpson, a retired political science professor at the University of Illinois Chicago who served on the City Council in the 1970s. "Under Rahm Emanuel, it was just money. He had $32 million [in campaign funds] and spent it to support aldermen. There were only a few aldermen who opposed him." Johnson, on the other hand, "doesn't have anything he can threaten them with, unless they need the Chicago Teachers Union. They think they can get elected without him."

Johnson also doesn't have a majority of alders he can rely on to back his proposals. The Progressive Caucus is his staunchest ally, but that's only 19 of 50 alders. To win a vote, Johnson faces the challenge of attracting support from either Northwest and Southwest Side conservatives or the moderate Common Sense Caucus, formed last year to oppose Johnson's budget and composed mostly of alders from downtown and the lakefront. He also has to balance the interests of the Black and Latino caucuses, which, despite their memberships with the ideological caucuses, prioritize the communities they represent, as when they objected to his council reorganization plan.

On paper, Chicago has always had a form of government with a strong council and a weak mayor. According to the municipal code, which dates back to 1837, the council has the power to defy the mayor's authority. But the only time it operated that way in recent history, at least until lately, was the Council Wars of Harold Washington's tenure, when 29 white alders blocked the mayor's appointments and legislation and voted themselves into chairmanships.

At the beginning of Johnson's term, Alderperson Scott Waguespack tested the mayor's power by drawing up a plan that allowed the council to choose its own committee chairs. Johnson defeated that but has since been losing authority. "If he does get back into office, the council will decide for itself who its leadership will be," says a former alderperson who served under Richard M. Daley and Rahm Emanuel. And what if someone else is elected? "Unless it's a strong presence, like a Rahm or a Daley, it'll be much more difficult for the mayor to decree this is his team. Part of the culture of the city government was this great deference to whoever happened to be mayor. The longer this goes on, and the fewer aldermen who were around in the old days, even if the next mayor is more competent, you're not going to be able to put the genie back in the bottle."

Last year's budget process was a prime example of Johnson's difficulty in finding support to get his proposals passed, Waguespack points out. The mayor had to promise new parks and other projects in various wards to win alders' votes. Though he did manage to get the budget passed in mid-December, two weeks before the end-of-the-year deadline, Waguespack was not impressed: "He doesn't have control of the room. I would say there's a permanent shift, but that doesn't mean a future mayor can't get consensus."

Alderperson Andre Vasquez, a member of the Progressive Caucus who broke with Johnson in voting against last year's budget, sees the shift as an "evolution" of city governance. He would like to see the council eventually acquire the staff to write the city's budget, a power that was usurped by Richard J. Daley, who began the current practice of mayors overseeing that task.

Even without that ability, the council will have a large say in Johnson's 2025 budget, which the mayor presented at the October council meeting. Johnson has to close a $1.19 billion gap. To do so, he wants to revive the employee head tax, eliminated in 2013, at a rate of $21 per worker. Alderperson Brian Hopkins doesn't think the mayor has the votes. And Alderperson Raymond Lopez questioned Johnson's plan for a social media tax that would bite Meta, X, and TikTok for 50 cents per Chicago user over 100,000. Just as he did last year, Johnson is going to have to make compromises – something the Daleys and Emanuel never had to do. But then, they never faced a budget situation this dire.

As far as Lopez is concerned, Chicago doesn't need another all-powerful mayor. It needs a strong council, since those members more directly represent the people: "If we have aldermen who are serious about government, you will have a City Council that will make it more difficult for the ascension of a kingmaker mayor."

Matthew Klein Photography

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FIVE THINGS

The Golden Girl of the Avant-Garde

A new book explores how early 20th-century editor Margaret C. Anderson outraged the literary establishment. Here's what we learned.

By ROBERT LOERZEL

The Little Review
Literature Drama Music Art
March, 1914
ULYSSES
by
JAMES JOYCE
A DANGER TO THE MINDS OF YOUNG GIRLS
MARGARET C. ANDERSON, BOOK BANS, AND THE FIGHT TO MODERNIZE LITERATURE
ADAM MORGAN

1 Margaret Anderson revolutionized literature on the cheap. When she launched *The Little Review* in 1914, out of the Fine Arts Building, she created one of the first outlets for avant-garde lit. But the underfunded editor didn't pay her writers, notes Adam Morgan in the new biography *A Danger to the Minds of Young Girls*. She argued that for a writer like Sherwood Anderson, it was "better to remain unpaid than for him to remain unprinted." As Morgan points out: "The work of these misfits on the outer fringes of literature would become the new canon, but not until Margaret had made them acceptable to mainstream publishers."

2 Her Uptown apartment was a hangout for radicals. Emma Goldman visited Anderson's place at 837 West Ainslie Street, where, the anarchist observed, "the entire furniture consisted of a piano, piano-stool, several broken cots, a table, and some kitchen chairs." Anderson also hosted hobo doctor Ben Reitman and Wobbly labor leader Big Bill Haywood.

3 She was beautiful and knew it. "It would be unbecoming of me not to know that I was extravagantly pretty … like a composite of all the most offensive magazine covers," she wrote. Her many male admirers included Ben Hecht, who said his writings for *The Little Review* "may have been actually valentines composed for [her]." But, as Morgan chronicles, Anderson was a lesbian who coupled with her *Little Review* collaborator, Jane Heap.

4 For a while, she edited her magazine out of a tent. When she was essentially homeless in 1915, she spent several months living and working with her team in five tents on a beach in Highland Park. Clad in a bathing suit, Anderson announced: "The next reporter who comes to this camp will receive a bullet. We came out here to be alone and we are tired of visitors."

5 She introduced *Ulysses* to the world. After Anderson moved in 1917 to Greenwich Village, *Little Review* contributor Ezra Pound sent her an unpublished novel by his friend James Joyce. "This is the most beautiful thing we'll ever have," Anderson told Heap. "We'll print it if it's the last effort of our lives." They serialized Joyce's masterpiece, knowing that the sex scenes could get them into trouble. In 1921, New York City authorities fined Anderson and Heap $50 each for publishing "lewdness and obscenity," and their magazine soon folded. Morgan says Anderson doesn't get enough credit for championing *Ulysses*, which "would change the very definition of what a book could be."

So We Meet Again, Packers

A hater's guide to hating Green Bay

BY EDWARD McCLELLAND

Since 1921, the Bears and Packers have faced each other 210 times, more than any two teams in the NFL. Green Bay has won 108 of those. (Curses, Favre and Rodgers.) This month they play *twice*. Here's how to cast bad mojo on our northern nemesis.

- Wear a foam cheese grater on your head.
- Wear a T-shirt that says "Packers Can Suck My Ditka and Kiss My Butkus."
- Wear a T-shirt that says "Popes From Chicago: 1. Popes From Green Bay: 0."
- Boycott Culver's. From Wisconsin with love? To Wisconsin with hate.
- Eat a hot dog, not a brat.
- If you must go to Wisconsin, don't cross the 50-yard line: that is, State Highway 50, which separates Bears and Packers fans.
- Tell jokes: "What do you call a beautiful girl in Green Bay? A tourist." Or: "What do you call a 350-pound Packers fan? Anorexic!"

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VOX

The Relief Corps

Northwestern's Steven Cohen went to Ukraine to study amputee soldiers and learn about pain. Interview by CINDY KUZMA

WHEN SOMETHING HURTS, Steven Cohen is the doctor you want to see: He's an expert in pain medicine, a specialty that cuts across disciplines. He's also a prolific researcher who has published more than 500 peer-reviewed papers and book chapters. His latest work draws on his military experience to investigate pain treatments. A retired army colonel who served in Bosnia, Iraq, and Afghanistan, he traveled to Ukraine last year to study soldiers injured in the war with Russia – specifically, amputees.

Cohen, vice chair of pain medicine and a professor of anesthesiology at Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine, talked with *Chicago* about pain that's particular to amputees, how what he learned in Ukraine could apply to the some 2 million Americans living with limb loss, and the potential for Botox and ketamine to provide relief.

Q: How did you begin working in Ukraine, studying amputee soldiers?

A: I'm the president of the American Society of Regional Anesthesia and Pain Medicine. Someone who was just elected to the board of our sister society, the European Society of Regional Anaesthesia and Pain Therapy, contacted me about all the amputations. The war there has resulted in more than 100,000 amputations. Extremity injuries are by far the most common in war. Your legs are something like 36 percent of your body surface area, your arms are 18 percent. And soldiers often have Kevlar on their heads and in their vests. The survival rate for injuries is much, much higher than it used to be, and limb salvage – surgery to restore damaged limbs – is a big thing for the military. There were no fellowship-trained pain doctors in the country. They asked me to look at the treatments that they were doing. I couldn't say no. It snowballed into chairing the largest pain conference in the country. We had people from all over the world – Korea, Thailand, Europe, South America – who were on video, but I was there in person.

Q: What was it like to hold a medical conference in a war zone?

A: My conference cochair was Ukrainian. He was supposed to come and speak, but he couldn't because there was a mass casualty event. In the

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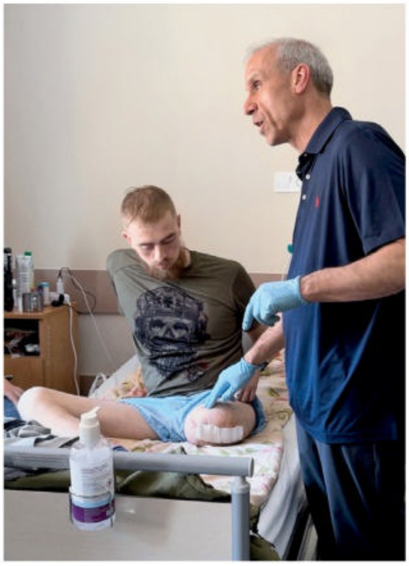
first few hours, there would be these air raid sirens. I was worried, but no one else seemed to be. They were like, "Oh, that's 80 kilometers to the southwest."

Q: How would you describe the type of pain that affects amputees?

A: Phantom limb pain and postamputation pain – there are so many different mechanisms, and they feel different. There's something called the homunculus: a somatotopic representation of your body, including your leg, in your brain. It's always getting signals from your leg and sending signals back. Then, all of a sudden, you don't have a leg. Your brain has to reorganize. You also have neuromas. Every time a nerve is cut or injured, a neuroma is formed. Basically, it's an entanglement of nerves. They can be very painful because they're sending signals. Nerve pain can be lancinating, electrical – it's unpredictable. You can also have stump pain, or pain elsewhere in the residual limb – including from bursitis, arthritis, pain referred from your spine, or scar tissue. Residual limb pain is terrible; people can't use prosthetics because it hurts. They can't function.



Cohen examining a Ukrainian amputee soldier

Q: Why is it so important to study pain relief options in these cases?

A: Many of these people were on superhigh doses of opioids. What you see in all wars is that you start to have psychological problems and substance use disorders. If you put people on opioids, there are absolutely going to be some who cannot get off, and it will just consume their lives.

Q: You collaborated with doctors in Ukraine to study two treatments. One was called hydrodissection. How does that work?

A: Hydrodissection uses fluid injections to release nerves that are entrapped from all the scar tissue that forms. It's like doing a laminectomy for a herniated disk or a carpal tunnel release. It may also decrease inflammatory substances called cytokines and increase blood flow to the nerves. In our study last year, we found hydrodissection was better for residual limb pain than for phantom pain. Which makes sense, because with phantom pain, there is the component of the brain and the spinal cord having to reorganize. Hydrodissection was also better for anxiety and depression at some points; people were able to reduce their opioid use more.

Q: You also looked at injecting botulinum toxin, better known as Botox, around neuromas — the bundles of nerves you mentioned. What did you find?

A: Botulinum toxin inhibits the release of neurotransmitters that are involved in pain, and it decreases inflammatory cytokines. In our study, it was compared to incredibly comprehensive treatment – these people had surgeries and ketamine infusions and were seeing psychologists. At one month, Botox seemed to be very effective, but it worked better for phantom limb pain than it did for residual limb pain. At three months, though, having comprehensive medical treatments was better. It seems like the duration of benefit for Botox is less than 80 days, so it's not going to last. We don't really know if repeating it will work, or adding it to these other treatments.

Q: Could these treatments be used here in the United States, not just for soldiers but for others who have limbs amputated?

A: Hydrodissection is really simple. That's why they're doing it over there. It probably works for planned amputations in addition to traumatic amputations. Botulinum toxin is also easy, but it's probably more expensive than uranium 235 – it's insane how much Botox costs. The first thing is to do more and better studies to see if it works in larger populations.

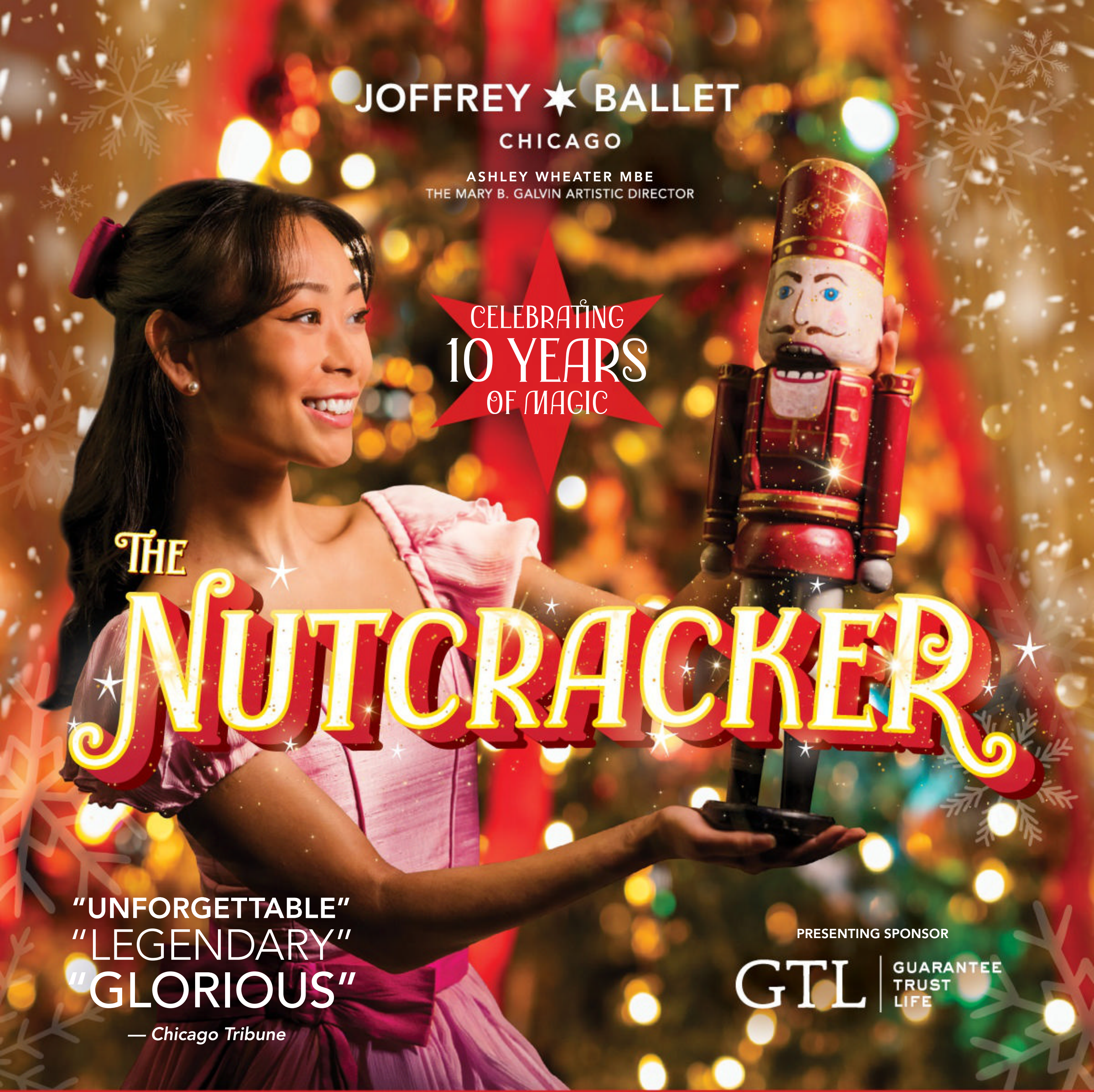
Q: You're starting another study, in the United States and in Ukraine, on brain injuries and PTSD. What treatments are you looking at?

A: We're the main site here, and have already enrolled five or six people. It's nearly approved at our site in Ukraine. There, they have an identical study, and then the data will be combined. Participants can have post-traumatic stress disorder or traumatic brain injury, or both. They're randomized to get stellate ganglion blocks or ketamine. Stellate ganglion blocks are injections into the ganglia – clusters of nerve cell bodies – in your neck. They're an incredibly hot topic for PTSD. Ketamine is basically a general anesthetic, which also works for depression and PTSD. Almost all treatments for depression and psychiatric disorders work for pain as well, because there's overlap in mechanisms and neurotransmitters. Ketamine is a short-acting drug – it's out of your system, undetectable, after 48 hours – but some people have relief that can last for more than a month. So I think it works on the affective component of pain, the emotional component. Some people in the study will get both treatments. But one out of eight will get a placebo and a sham block. I know it stinks if you're in a trial and that's what you get. But as a scientist, it's important to find efficacy. We really need to know why this works.

Q: Your son is in the military. Does that motivate your work?

A: He graduated from West Point in 2024 and chose the infantry. He's waiting to go through Ranger School. While he was at West Point, he got two traumatic brain injuries in training accidents. He had all these weird symptoms – the top of his head was really sensitive, he couldn't wear the Kevlar. But it got better, and now it's completely resolved. It's just wild that I'm studying this thing, and my son gets it, twice. ▣

PHOTOGRAPH: COURTESY OF NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY



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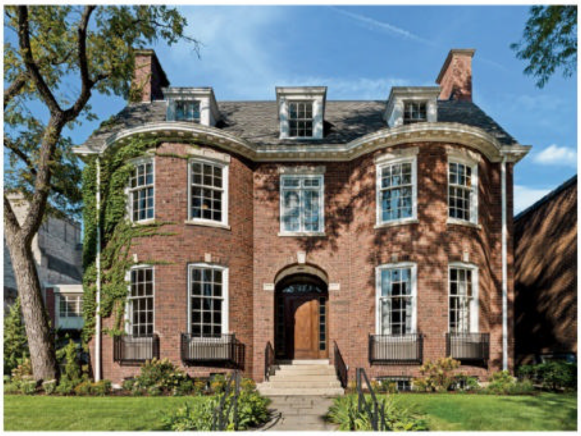
Joffrey Company Artist Nae Kojima. Photo by Todd Rosenberg.

LISTING OF THE MONTH

Publisher's Pad

The former home of a textbook exec is ready for its next chapter. By THOMAS CONNORS



NEW ENGLANDER HENRY Hoyt Hilton arrived in Chicago in 1894 to open an office for Ginn & Company, which at one time was the largest textbook publisher in the country. He rose to become president of the firm and made quite a life for himself in Chicago, serving as a trustee of the Chicago Theological Seminary, enjoying membership in the Union League Club, and residing in a Federal-style residence designed by architect Howard Van Doren Shaw. That Hyde Park house is now on the market at $3.1 million.

Born in Chicago and trained at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Shaw was a contemporary of Frank Lloyd Wright, who regarded his work as old-fashioned. He dissed one Shaw house with the remark, "I utterly failed to imagine entering it other than in a costume." Nonetheless, Shaw had no trouble attracting clients who appreciated his traditional architectural styles.

Designed in 1911, the former Hilton residence at 5638 South Woodlawn Avenue sits in the shadow of the First Unitarian Church (and just blocks from Wright's Robie House). Measuring 8,000 square feet over three floors, the red brick home, with its deeply recessed front door capped with a fanlight, has six bedrooms (five with en suite baths) and ample living space, including a roomy library and formal dining room, plus contemporary areas such as an exercise room and, on the third floor, a monster family room.

The home combines updates (renovated bathrooms, a chef's kitchen) with the period charm of wood paneling, a butler's pantry, and three fireplaces. The primary bedroom features a large walk-in closet and a separate sitting room. There's an office off the kitchen and a deck on the third floor. No problem finding a quiet spot to read here.

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> PORTAGE PARK

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4100 N. Long Ave.

> COMMUNITY TAVERN

"It's a gastropub with Asian influences. They have a sophisticated thing going on. There's a lot of creativity on the menu. I love the barbecued ribs with ginger-lemongrass caramel. My wife gets the green papaya salad."
4038 N. Milwaukee Ave.
–JUDY SUTTON TAYLOR

PHOTOGRAPHY: (HOUSE) BRENT BORCHARDT/VISUAL VANTAGE CHICAGO; (MOSELEY) RYAN BRANDOFF

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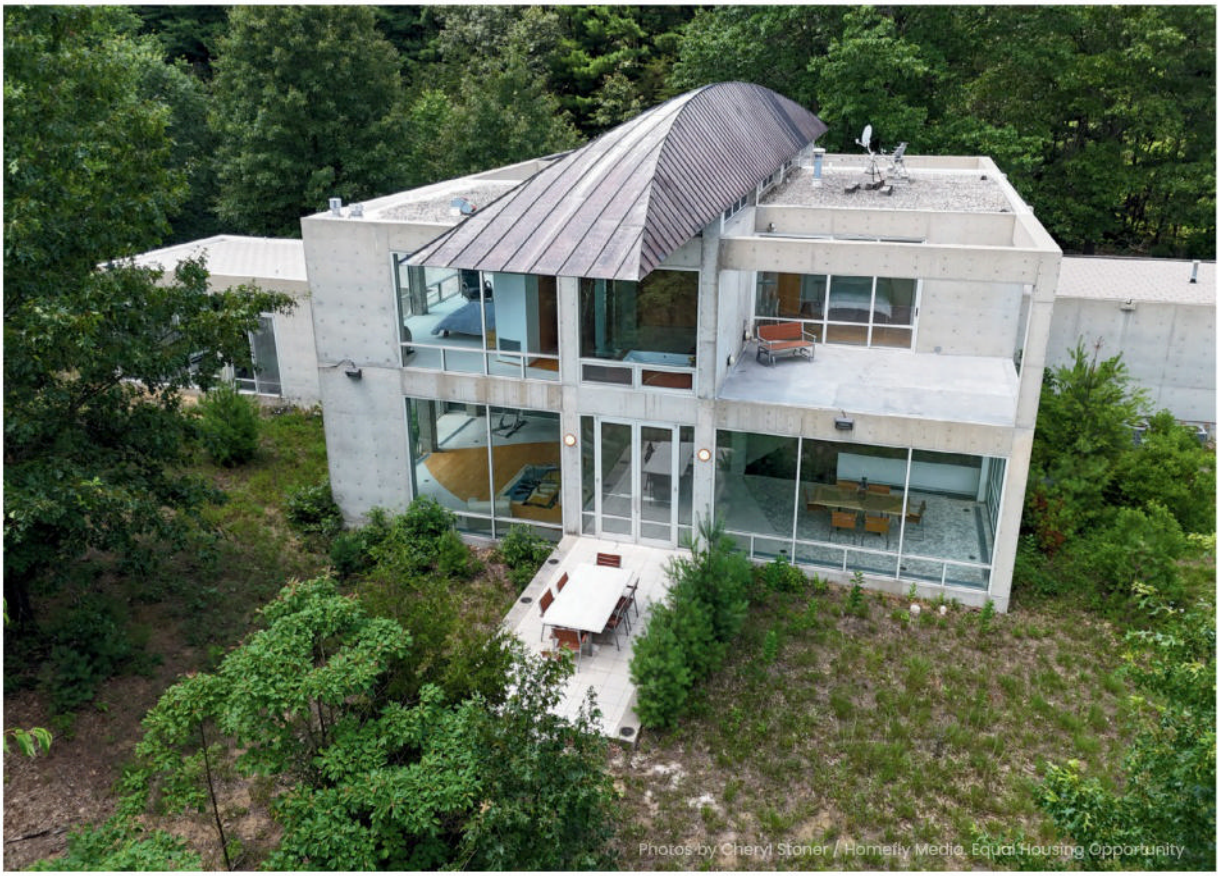

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THE REGIMEN

Sarah Spain

ESPN personality, former heptathlete, Grand Canyon hiker

By WEB BEHRENS

MOTION IS LOTION” IS A MAXIM Sarah Spain lives by. But behind the Emmy-winning ESPN journalist’s kilowatt smile is a woman who has endured a painful journey to stay active. Raised in Lake Forest, she was a heptathlete at Cornell – until an Achilles tear and surgery left her with a shortened calf muscle and lifelong imbalance in her kinetic chain. Marathons and yoga are out; walking and hot Pilates at Chicago’s 105F studios are in. Meanwhile, she’s hitting new highs professionally. This summer, the 45-year-old published her first book: *Runs in the Family*, the true story of a football coach grappling with generational trauma. And last year, she launched the first daily podcast about women’s sports, *Good Game With Sarah Spain*. She records from her Wicker Park home, which she shares with her husband and three rescue pups.

POOCH POWER WALKING

“For seven years doing national radio, I was a night owl. My new schedule is afternoon-based, so I start every day around 7 a.m. with a three-mile walk. I take my young dog, Indy. My favorite place to walk is Humboldt Park; a lot of people don’t know how beautiful it is.”

TEMPERATURE EXTREMES

“I’ll walk in cold weather. When I trained to hike to the bottom of the Grand Canyon with my mom a couple years ago, it was winter. Meanwhile, my greatest recent discovery is inferno-hot Pilates in a 105-degree room. It’s mat-based and uses Pilates principles, but without jumping or doing anything hard on the back.”

BOXING OUT STRESS

“If my mind is reeling, I use a trick from meditation: the four-count box breath [inhaling for a count of four, holding for four, exhaling for four, holding for four]. If you do it long enough, it stops you from thinking about all the other things.”

CODE TO JOY

“I’ve read a lot of books about neuroplasticity. It isn’t going to automatically fix mental health disorders, but it helps train your brain to look for joys in everyday life. I used to stress over my weight and whether how I look will affect how I succeed in my job. Now I’m much more at peace — confident and grateful for what I do have, instead of cursing what I don’t.”

PHOTOGRAPH: GRESEI/GETTY IMAGES

Photograph by LISA PREDKO

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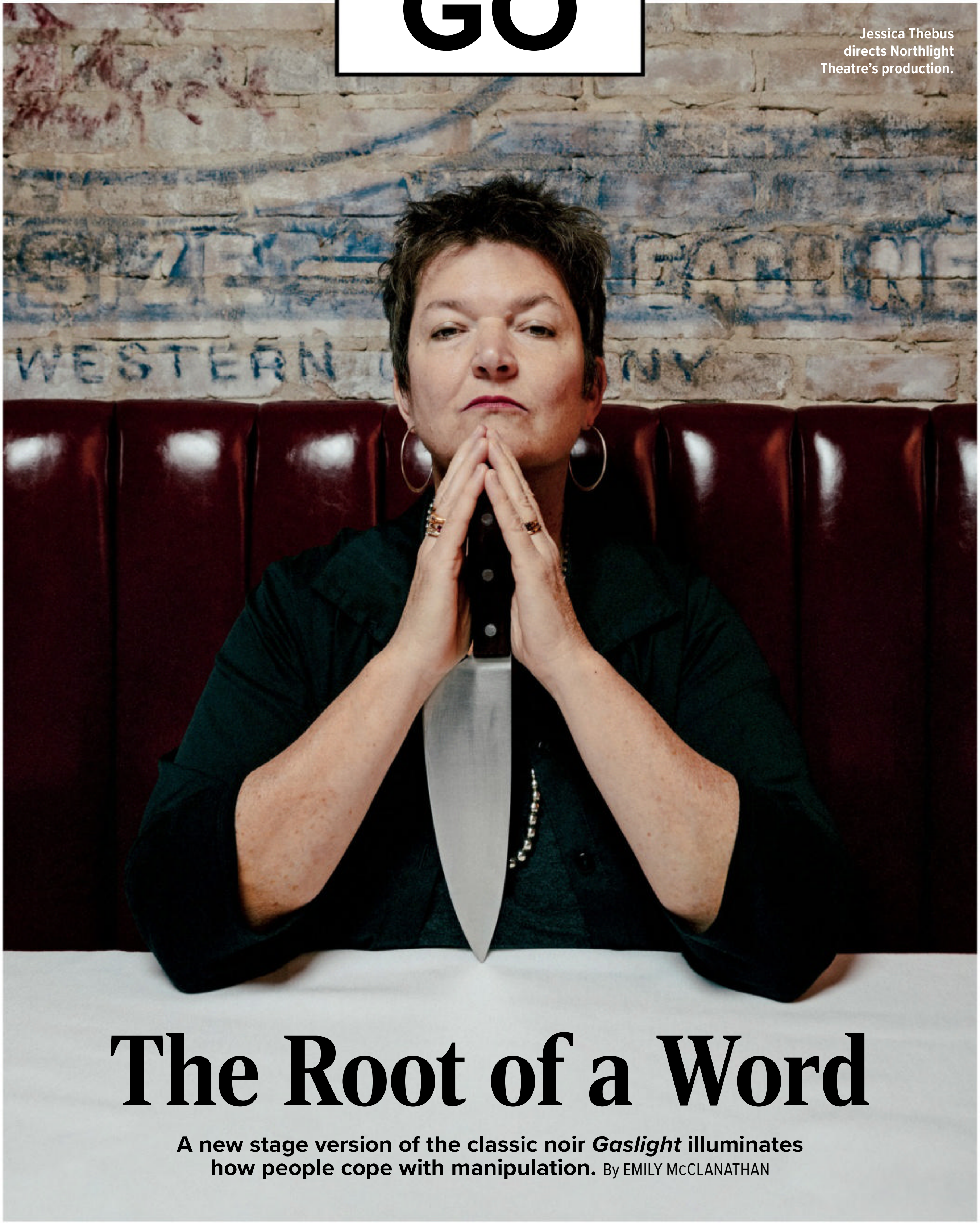

Jessica Thebus directs Northlight Theatre's production.

The Root of a Word

A new stage version of the classic noir *Gaslight* illuminates how people cope with manipulation. By EMILY McCLANATHAN

LOCATION: COURTESY OF THE BARN STEAKHOUSE

Photograph by LYNDON FRENCH

WHEN MERRIAM-WEBSTER selected "gaslighting" as its 2022 word of the year, citing a spike in search traffic, its editors declared that, in the age of misinformation, it was "a word for our time." While ubiquitous these days, the term actually dates back to 1938, when *Gas Light*, a psychological thriller set in the Victorian era, premiered onstage in London.

"It's fascinating to see how a certain type of behavior and relationship is really archetypal," says Lawrence Grimm, the veteran Chicago actor who plays the manipulative Jack Manningham in a new production, running November 28 to January 4 at Northlight Theatre in Skokie. "Gaslighting is probably timeless."

Spoiler alert for an 80-plus-year-old story: The play captures one climactic evening in a long game of cat and mouse between a scheming husband and the wealthy wife he's trying to force into a mental institution. Over the past decade, the word "gaslight" has become synonymous with the act of deliberately manipulating people to such a degree that they no longer trust their own memory. But the title of British playwright Patrick Hamilton's nail biter also had a period-specific literal meaning, referring to the lighting fixtures that mysteriously dim whenever the protagonist's husband leaves the house – a phenomenon that clues her in to his deceptions.

A hit on Broadway, where it opened under the name *Angel Street* in 1941, *Gaslight* was adapted by Hollywood in 1944 (with its title melded into one word). Ingrid Bergman won an Academy Award for her iconic performance, while Angela Lansbury, making her screen debut at age 17, was nominated for playing a cunning maid.

Co-stars Lawrence Grimm and Cheyenne Casebier

PHOTOGRAPH: GREG INDA

"It's fascinating to see how a certain type of behavior and relationship is really archetypal. Gaslighting is probably timeless."

Jessica Thebus, who directs the Northlight version, recalls watching a revival screening as a teenager at the Varsity Theater, Evanston's long-defunct movie palace: "My best friend and I loved it, and we would quote from it." Her production's design is influenced by the film's brooding film-noir look – an opulent set that's "fraying at the edges," Thebus says. "Even though it's not really a ghost story, it's not *not* a ghost story. It has to feel like the house is alive."

Northlight's version is set in 1880s New York City, not in London – one of the updates in this 2023 script by Steven Dietz. A widely produced playwright who lives in Austin and Seattle, Dietz has penned more than 40 works: original mysteries such as *How a Boy Falls*, which made its world premiere at Northlight in 2020, and stage adaptations of stories by the likes of Agatha Christie, Arthur Conan Doyle, and Bram Stoker. "He has a gift for refreshing classic thrillers," says artistic director BJ Jones.

While Dietz doesn't make major changes to the plot, the women in his version show more individual agency and solidarity with each other. Recent Seattle transplant Cheyenne Casebier, who understudied for Helen Hunt earlier this year in the Goodman's *Betrayal*, makes her Northlight debut as Bella Manningham, the target of Jack's gaslighting. Bella is no ingénue, but, as Casebier notes, circumstances have left her "emotionally porous" and vulnerable to a dangerous dynamic. "I don't think that it's an unusual place for people, mostly women, to find themselves in," she says.

In Thebus's view, the play speaks to the modern experience of overcoming manipulation on many levels, from political rhetoric and deceptive advertising to calculated maneuvering by a romantic partner or family member. "Extricating yourself is harder than one would hope," she says, "and I think that's true nationally, it's true societally, and also true personally."

Despite the dark psychological world that *Gaslight* inhabits, "there are moments where everybody has a choice," Thebus continues. "Even for a character as bewildered as Bella, deep down, she still knows how to trust her instincts – and therein lies a glimmer of hope: "If you can keep listening to that voice, that's so often the voice that actually does get us out the door."

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AGENDA

Top 10 reasons to fill up your calendar this month

By WEB BEHRENS

EVOKING THE GOLDEN BOY
The Siskel Film Center hosts a monthlong Robert Redford retrospective honoring the ultimate movie star. Screenings include *The Sting*, *All the President's Men*, and *Quiz Show*. *Dec. 2–31. siskelfilmcenter.org*

SING OUT, MS. CLEVES!
The half dozen wives of Henry VIII belt their way through beheadings and divorces when the pop-rock musical *Six* returns on tour. *Dec. 2–14. broadwayinchicago.com*

WHAT'S NOT TO LOVE?
Native son John C. Reilly expands the Great American Songbook with his vaudeville-inspired show, *Mister Romantic*. *Dec. 4–6. steppenwolf.org*

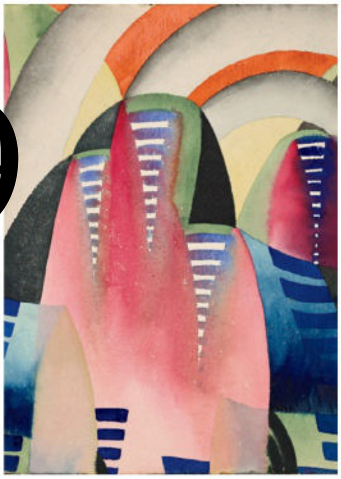
DISCOMFORT ZONE
Emmy-winning comedian Jerrod Carmichael, who dissects his interracial queer relationship in his most recent HBO special, *Don't Be Gay*, settles in for six nights of standup. *Dec. 6–11. thedentheatre.com*

SLEIGH ME
The Aimee Mann & Ted Leo Christmas Show, an evening of songs and sketches anchored by the beloved indie musicians, skates into the Irish American Heritage Center. *Dec. 11–12. oldtownschool.org*

PORN THIS WAY
The kinky film fest Hump!, curated by sex advice columnist (and native Chicagoan) Dan Savage, screens twice at the Music Box. *Dec. 11. musicboxtheatre.com*

PROJECTING GOOD CHEER
Created during the pandemic, *Manual Cinema's Christmas Carol* reimagines Dickens's classic through the lens of skeptical Aunt Trudy, who hosts a Zoom holiday gathering. *Dec. 12–28. fineartsbuilding.com*

THE FAUX NEPO BABIES
Though not related to the Piano Man, local comedians-turned-rockers Billy Joel Jr. have nurtured that joke into a burgeoning fan base. *Dec. 18. emptybottle.com*



DRUMS OF LORE
Tsukasa Taiko's annual MCA concerts, *Taiko Legacy* and *Reduction*, are a December treat. This year, *Reduction* ties into the Yoko Ono exhibition with jazz-fusion covers of the Plastic Ono Band. *Dec. 19–20. airmw.org*

OUTSIDER ARCHITECTURE
Iconoclastic 20th-century architect Bruce Goff championed fantastical shapes. The Art Institute delves into his *Material Worlds* with this retrospective. *Dec. 20–March 29. artic.edu*

PHOTOGRAPHY: (*THE STING*) UNIVERSAL PICTURES; (*SIX*) JOAN MARCUS; (REILLY) BOBBI RICH; (MANN & LEO) CHRISTIAN LANTRY; (*CHRISTMAS CAROL*) JENN UDONI/FRANCO IMAGES; (*MATERIAL WORLDS*) THE ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO

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TABLE

The Epicurean Guide to Chicago’s Airports

Our food writers offer their picks for what to eat at O’Hare and Midway.

By AMY CAVANAUGH, PETER GIANOPULOS, LISA SHAMES, and JOEY SKLADANY

Illustration by DAMIEN CUYPERS

O'Hare

TORTAS FRONTERA

🪑🍷

Terminals 1, 3, and 5; Gates B11, K4, and M18

Rick Bayless's terrific tortas spot is my go-to for both breakfast and lunch. If it's morning, I get the egg and rajas torta, with scrambled eggs, roasted poblano rajas, Cotija and Jack cheese, and avocado, while midday I go for the crispy chicken Milanesa, with cabbage, pickled jalapeños, Cotija, avocado-tomatillo salsa, and cilantro crema. And when I just need a snack, the guacamole and an El Súper Clásico margarita can ease the pain of any delay. –A.C.

LA TAPENADE MEDITERRANEAN CAFE

🪑🛍🍷

Terminals 1, 2, and 3; Gates B4, E9, and H14

For a fast and delicious—and healthy—breakfast, I swing by La Tapenade for the vegetable frittata. It's a fluffy square of eggs loaded with veggies, including asparagus, zucchini, butternut squash, mushrooms, and onions. It also comes with a little cup of red grapes you can save for a plane snack. –A.C.

PRONTO SANDWICHES

🛍

Terminal 1, Gate B14

An Old World Italian sandwich in an airport? Fuhgeddaboudit. Unless, of course, you hightail your carry-ons to Pronto, which serves real-deal Italian subs inspired by Tinseltown icons. Order one on schiacciata, a flatbread with a focaccia-like skin and airy ciabatta interior. Some swoon (predictably) over the tomato-and-pepper DiCaprio, but I go for the Pacino, made with prosciutto, mozzarella, arugula, and a truffled pecorino spread. Grab one for the plane, and it'll be the best in-flight upgrade you'll find. –P.G.

PRONTO
PRONTO

BUBBLES WINE BAR

🍷

Terminal 3, Gate H4

I like to toast my upcoming adventure (or just making it through security) with a glass of bubbly at this wine bar. Some favorites: Veuve Clicquot Yellow Label Brut when I want a classic, or Lanson Le Rosé Brut when I want to go pink. Plus, there's entertainment: A nearby piano is open to anyone; you'll see the occasional airport employee tickling the ivories. –L.S.

🪑 sit-down
🛍 on-the-go
🍷🥤 for a drink

Photography by JEFF MARINI

PUBLICAN TAVERN

Terminal 3, Gate K1

PUBLICAN QUALITY BREAD

Terminal 5, Gate M5

When I have time to sit at Publican Tavern, I'm getting the menu's indisputable star: a succulent pub burger topped with American cheese, crisp lettuce, balsamic onions, and special sauce on a pillowy brioche bun. But when there's just enough time to tap a credit card? I head to the grab-and-go case for gems like the chicken sandwich with bacon, avocado, and blue cheese aïoli. Or if I'm catching an international flight, I'll snag a latte and caramelized kouign-amann on the go at Terminal 5's Publican Quality Bread. –J.S.

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Please Wait To Be Seated

Midway

ARAMI

Concourse A Food Hall

Arami closed its West Town location last year, but thankfully this outpost remains, since it's one of your best culinary options at Midway. Your standard premade airport sushi this is not. Sitting down at the bar and ordering the freshly made California, cucumber, and avocado rolls is my go-to for a preflight lunch or dinner that's light but satisfying. –A.C.

BILLY GOAT TAVERN

Concourse A Food Hall (also at O'Hare's Terminal 1, Gate C19)

After multiple attempts, I've finally dialed in the perfect order at the Midway location of this Chicago institution. Start with the double burger, which is a quarter pound of beef, then add cheese, grilled and raw onions, extra pickles, and mustard and mayo. It's both hearty and tasty enough to hold me until I reach my destination. –A.C.

BIG SHOULDERS COFFEE

Concourse A, Gate A15

When you make it through security, the first spot you'll see to grab coffee is Dunkin'. Bypass that line and hoof it to the very end of Concourse A, where you'll find the best java in the airport. Local roaster Big Shoulders serves "fast coffee" (that's drip), cold brew, and espresso drinks. My order: the hot cardamom latte, a cozy drink with warming spices. –A.C.

Clockwise, from top left: Ratatouille potatoes, mussels, gougères, Little Gem salad, chicken, carrots

REVIEW

A Bold New Bistro

Creepies, from the Elske team, still needs some refining, but it's already the city's most exciting place to eat.

By JOHN KESSLER

F OR MOST OF US, THE WORD "bistro" conjures a certain aesthetic and menu. Picture yourself in one, and you're at a table covered with butcher paper spooning onion soup from a crock. A reproduction of Degas's *L'Absinthe* hangs on the wall, and a waiter in a long apron brings you Pouilly-Fumé in a little stemmed glass. You'll switch to red when the steak frites arrive. *Vive la France.*

While the cookie cutters keep stamping out variations of this restaurant, something fresh is afoot. In Paris there's a burgeoning cadre of "neo-bistros" – neighborhood spots headed by a chef who prepares the familiar, affordable food you crave but updates it for a modern palate. Many feature wine lists more attuned to the natural revolution than the old orthodoxies.

Creepies may be Chicago's first true neo-bistro. While not flawless, its blending of Midwestern and French influences in the year 2025 is tone perfect. Four years in the making, it is the second restaurant from David and Anna Posey, who run the Michelin-starred Elske next door. They've tapped their longtime employee Tayler Ploshehanski as chef de cuisine. "Seventy-five percent of the dishes are David's conception, but I created all the recipes and executed everything," Ploshehanski says. Knowing the way dishes come together on the plate at Elske, I recognize Posey's influence. Yet I also taste Ploshehanski's new-to-me culinary voice – one that is fond of thoughtful surprises, committed to the art of sauce making, and Francophilic to its core.

Despite the line drawings of furtive faces that crawl over the menu and dishware, there's nothing creepy about Creepies. (The name was a joke when the Poseys were scouting divey-looking real estate, and it stuck.) Fashioned from two storefronts connected by a corridor, the dining room is anchored by a bold black-and-white checkerboard floor and incorporates pine wainscoting, a long mirrored wall with counter seating, exposed brick, and knickknack-filled alcoves. "They were going for Midwest basement meets French bistro," says Ploshehanski. Indeed, both a rolling bread cart and a Ping-Pong table would seem right at home.

The oddly shaped space leaves no room for a bar, so Elske's bar director, Monica Casillas-Rios, has created a small selection of two-ingredient cocktails that the waitstaff can mix into remarkably layered beverages. The blend of cognac and Byrrh (a bitter apéritif wine) plugged right into the Manhattan socket in my brain but gave it a different charge. In addition, wine director Emily Sher assembled an affordable natural list and is an enthusiastic proselytizer. She may suggest an oxidized Chardonnay with roast chicken or turn you onto Zumo Forest Drink, a juicy Grenache. Go with her flow.

Enjoy these first sips with warm gougères filled with Brie, which are crispy-sticky from a coating of Parmesan and honey, or the pistachio-studded sausage baked in puff pastry and served cold with sinus-clearing pistachio mustard. The pastry is a bit flaccid from the fridge, but the flavors are spot on. This recipe could be either the specialty of Aunt Shirley in Kenosha or a dish you loved at that spot in the 11th Arrondissement.

Photography by JACLYN RIVAS

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Tayler Ploshehanski

Ploshehanski knows that a bistro can only sell you on the chef's experiments if it does some classics better than anyone else. She comes through: Her roast chicken is now the one to beat in Chicago, with golden crisp skin and flesh that's firm and juicy from a cure. It's a high-quality bird that you eagerly swipe through the winy, liver-enriched sauce. Her fries, too, can stop conversation – they snap like twigs and taste like butter. They are, in fact, partly fried in clarified butter and so delicious on their own that I had no interest in infringing on them with the garlic aïoli or onion chutney dips.

CREEPIES
★★½
1360 W. Randolph St., West Loop
■ **Dinner for two** $250
■ **Tip** If you're not into the adventurous natural wine list, corkage is only $35.

★ Recommended
★★ Very good ★★★ Excellent
★★★★ Exceptional

A good neo-bistro should also have dishes that get everyone talking. Here, it's mussels in a buttery sauce with fennel giardiniera and a cumulus of Pernod foam. I may not love this dish but I admire it, and I need more fennel giardiniera in my life. The other talker: pan-fried Parisian gnocchi tossed with ham and Swiss and covered with a sheet of brik pastry that you shatter like a crème brûlée. This one is just stupid good. Try it, and let's chat.

The entrées are shareable but vegless. There are three: that chicken the archangels make for God, Walter Payton, and Paul Bocuse; a nice enough lamb rack with a swaddle of Swiss chard; and a silky halibut fillet in a lobster-pepper sauce. These slurpable sauces cry out for the day when no one shared and a bread basket came free.

The cooking is ambitious, but the kitchen isn't always up to the task. I want to recommend the pommes ratatouille – thinly sliced potatoes roasted until crisp in a pool of Provençal veggies – but I also want those potatoes to be cooked through. And while I love the idea of tavern-style tarte flambée, ours was dry, cold, and nearly burnt.

Service staff members also seem to be on a learning curve. They are lovely and enthusiastic, but it's the little things: They stand at the front punching iPads excessively and make us wait too long for wine and water refills.

Still, Anna Posey's desserts will send you out on a high note. I loved the crunchy-cool layered raspberry sherbet meringue cake as much as I had expected, but holy hell, the butterscotch custard – topped with crème fraîche, lemon rind, and a bitter chocolate cookie – had a narrative arc in every bite.

It all fits into the fully realized vision of French bistro meets Midwestern nice. Some recipes need tweaks, and the staff needs to better control the room. But Creepies tells this story so well that you lean in, rapt, ready for the next chapter.

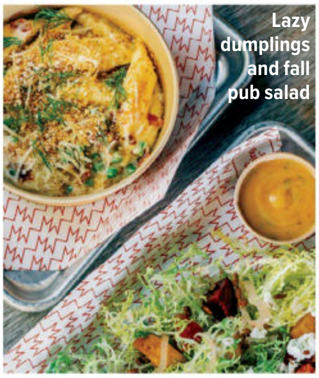
NEIGHBORHOOD FIND

Polished Up

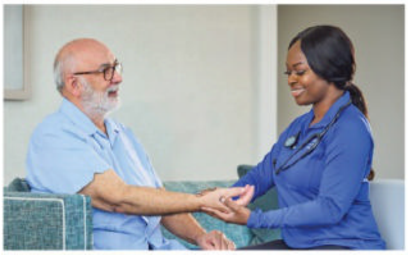
MAPLEWOOD LOUNGE
2717 N. Maplewood Ave., Avondale
■ **Perfect order** Pork butter, fall pub salad, lazy dumplings

■ Maplewood, a brewery and distillery, has long been known for its canned beers like Son of Juice IPA. But since 2017 it has also run a semihidden taproom hard up against a weed-choked highway overpass in Avondale, and since earlier this year that taproom has spawned one of the city's more interesting venues for Polish food. When chef Joanna Janczurewicz (BiXi) was tapped to design a menu, she leaned into her heritage. "I said, 'Guys, just trust me. Chicago has such a deep Polish history,'" she recalls. "It was a bit of a leap of faith."

The food, which for now comes in cardboard, includes such fun bites as smalec, a spread of 'pork butter' (a.k.a. lard) flavored with cracklings, onions, and apples and served with sourdough, and leniwe kluski (lazy dumplings) made with farmer's cheese and topped with Parmesan-dill cream sauce. Char-grilled kielbasas and house pickles (sweet and gently tart) keep the tone Old World, but there's also a smashburger for folks who want traditional pub fare. Look for rotating seasonal vegetables, like a pub salad with roasted beets, butternut squash, and barley. While I'll miss the grilled corn and shishitos from summer, the Brussels bowl with bacon fat vinaigrette, shallots, and hazelnuts has my name on it. –JOHN KESSLER


Lazy dumplings and fall pub salad

PHOTOGRAPH: (MAPLEWOOD) JEFF MARINI



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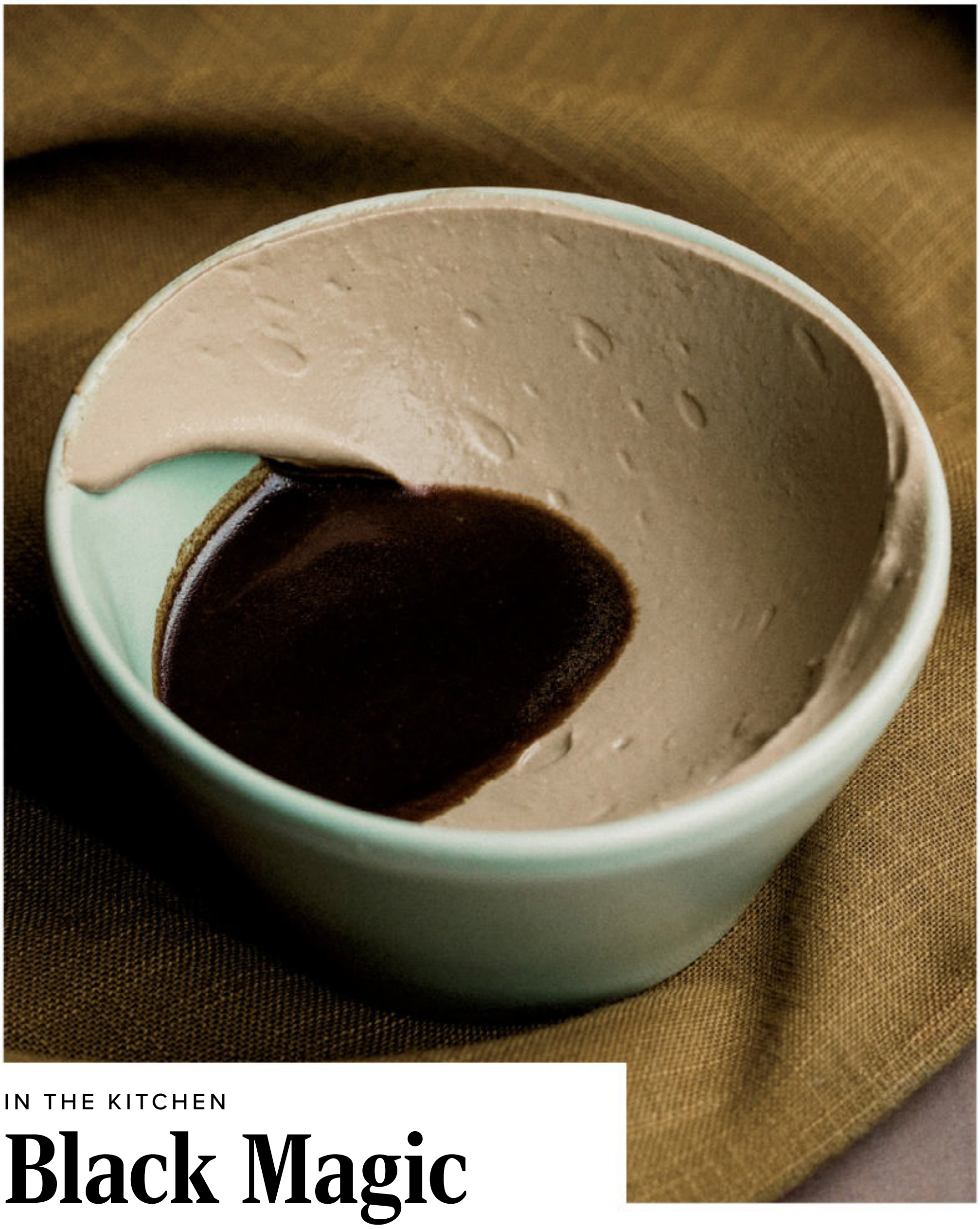

IN THE KITCHEN

Black Magic

ASK A SOURDOUGH BAKER, A SAUERKRAUT maker, or anyone else who dabbles in fermentation: Time is the secret ingredient for unlocking profound layers of flavor. Take, for instance, black garlic, produced by holding standard garlic at warm temperatures for days or even weeks. "It slowly caramelizes until it's black, with a raisiny, molasses-like flavor," says Cafe Yaya chef and co-owner Zach Engel. He whips puréed black garlic cloves into tahini for a dip that comes together easily but packs a depth that makes raw garlic seem like a boorish loudmouth. "It makes the tahini have an evolving round of tastes," says Engel. "Nutty, to sweet, to umami, to a little fruity acidity." –CATE HUGUELET

CAFE YAYA'S BLACK GARLIC TAHINI

Makes About 3 cups
Active time 20 minutes
Total time 50 minutes

3	fresh garlic cloves, unpeeled
½	cup lemon juice
4	black garlic cloves, peeled (available on Amazon)
1	teaspoon kosher salt (preferably Morton brand)
1½	cups raw tahini (preferably Soom brand)
	Crudités, baguette, or socca (chickpea flatbread), for serving

1

Infuse the lemon juice: Use the side of a knife to gently smash fresh garlic cloves. Place them in a small bowl and add lemon juice. Set aside to infuse for 30 minutes.

2

Purée the garlic: Strain lemon juice into a blender jar, discarding fresh garlic cloves or reserving for another use. Add black garlic cloves and salt. Blend on high until smooth, 2 to 3 minutes.

3

Make the dip: Place raw tahini in the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the whisk attachment. Whip on high for 5 minutes. Decrease speed to medium and slowly drizzle in the garlic purée, mixing until incorporated and tahini looks grainy. With the mixer running, add 1¼ cups ice water in a slow but consistent stream. Once incorporated, raise the mixer speed to high and whip until smooth, glossy, and aerated like mousse, 5 minutes. For a thinner consistency, whip in up to ¼ cup additional ice water. Serve with crudités, sliced baguette, or socca for dipping.

Photograph by JEFF MARINI

HOLIDAYS SHINE ON CHICAGO'S NORTH SHORE

The holiday season is upon us and we turn our attention to this special time of year to experience dramatic light shows, cozy shared meals, holiday performances, Santa sightings and artisan gift fairs. Let's fully immerse ourselves in the warmth of this special season. For the train-loving kids in your life, don't miss Curious George: Let's get curious at **Kohl Children's Museum** through 1/4. Check out our holiday season lineup: **North Shore Center for the Performing Arts** presents Salt Creek Ballet's The Nutcracker, 12/5-6, Music of the Baroque: Holiday Brass and Choral Concerts, 12/21-22. **Northlight Theatre** presents Gaslight through 12/28. **Writers Theatre** brings As You Like It to the stage through 12/14. **Music Theater Works** brings Annie to the stage, 12/8-1/4. **Theo Ubique** presents Urinetown trough 12/21. **Oil Lamp Theater** presents A Christmas Carol - A Live Radio Show through 12/28. **Evanston Space** presents Ana Gasteyer sugar & booze, 12/11. Preservation Hall Jazz Band 12/12. A Charlie Brown Christmas 12/14, 19-21.

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A big part of the holidays revolves around shopping and we have amazing options. Add holiday parades, performances, delicious meals and tree lighting ceremonies. Enjoy the outdoors with activities including skating, sledding, cozy beverages and fire pits.

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The Hot List

10 places everyone's talking about (in order of heat)

Atsumeru

Midōsuji

1 **ATSUMERU** **What** A Japanese-Nordic fusion tasting menu from Devin Denzer (Loon). **Why** The 10-to-12-course experience winds you through the sleek bilevel space. **Where** *933 N. Ashland Ave., Noble Square*

2 **BUTTERCUP** **What** Café by day, amaro bar by night. **Why** It's Israel Idonije's latest entrant to the South Loop scene, featuring cocktails and plates from Oliver's beverage director and chef. **Where** *75 E. 16th St., South Loop*

3 **MIDŌSUJI** **What** An eight-seat omakase from Boka Restaurant Group at the Chicago Athletic Association. **Why** Expect bites that meld Japanese and French influences. **Where** *12 S. Michigan Ave., Loop*

4 **BABE'S SPORTS BAR** **What** Bars showing women's sports are a national trend; Chicago finally gets one. **Why** Catch a game over spicy passionfruit margaritas or prosecco on tap. **Where** *3017 W. Armitage Ave., Logan Square*

5 **DOROTHY'S BAKERY** **What** A brick-and-mortar of Brian Bruns's farmers' market bakery. **Why** Swing by on your lunch break for a Manzo sandwich with roast beef, giardiniera, and Swiss. **Where** *2318 N. Clark St., Lincoln Park*

6 **HONEY BUTTER BEACH CLUB** **What** A new outpost of the fried chicken purveyor opens at SPF, an indoor pickleball space. **Why** Smash the ball, then smash some fried shrimp tacos. **Where** *2121 N. Clybourn Ave., Lincoln Park*

7 **EAVES** **What** A new restaurant and cocktail bar arrives at the Lyric Opera. **Why** Amanda McLemore serves Southern European dishes like handmade pastas and limoncello sundaes. **Where** *20 N. Wacker Dr., Loop*

8 **AKIRO NIKKEI HAND ROLL BAR** **What** A newbie on the hand roll scene. **Why** Melds Japanese and Peruvian flavors. **Where** *546 N. Wells St., River North*

9 **PIZZA DADA** **What** New York za from Table, Donkey and Stick at Sterling Food Hall. **Why** More slice options? Yes, please! **Where** *125 S. Clark St., Loop*

10 **VAN LEEUWEN** **What** Two locations of the fancy New York ice cream chain arrive in town. **Why** Sample cult-favorite flavors like Honeycomb and Earl Grey Tea. **Where** *233 S. Wacker Dr., Loop; 1555 N. Damen Ave., Wicker Park*

PHOTOGRAPHY: (ATSUMERU) KINSHIP COMPANY; (MIDŌSUJI) NICK PODRAZA

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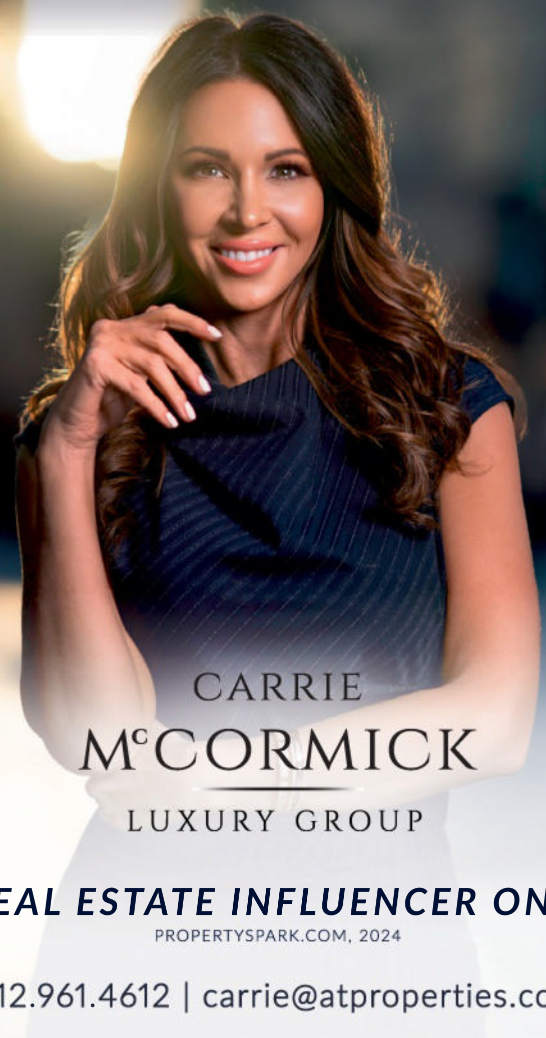

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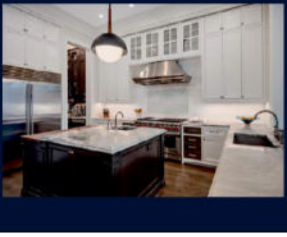

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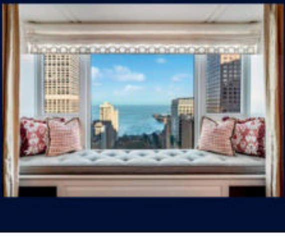

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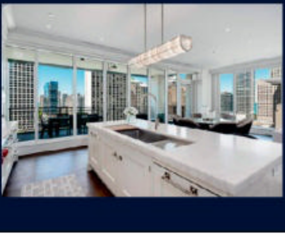

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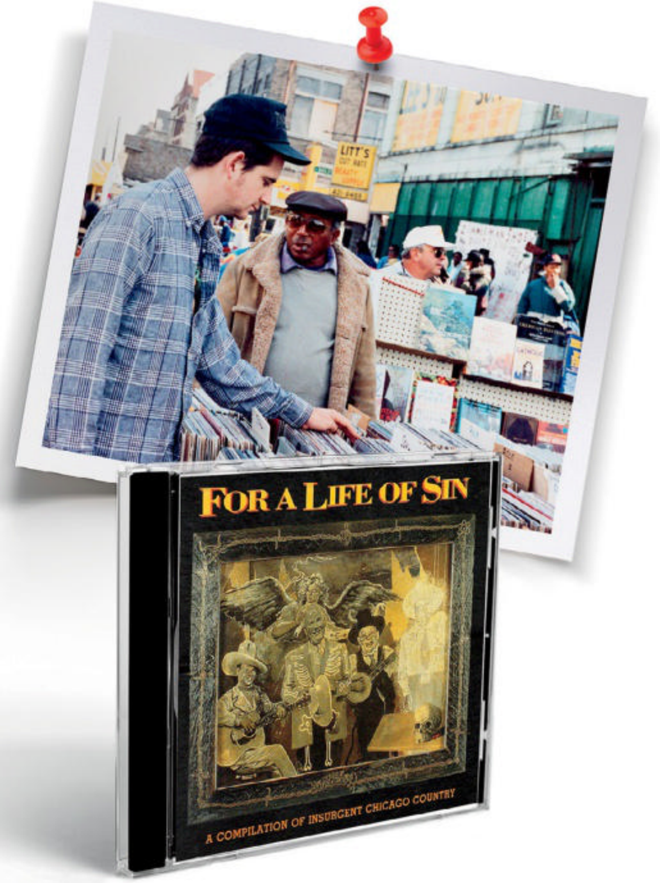
Punk Meets Country

In an excerpt from his new memoir, a Bloodshot Records founder recounts the birth of a genre-defining label. By ROB MILLER

IT WAS A GOLDEN ERA OF INDIE LABELS. YOU COULDN'T SWING A dead cat in 1990s Chicago without hitting one that was defined by idiosyncratic interests and personalities, all dogged enough to make them viable. Touch and Go, Delmark, Alligator, Wax Trax!, Thrill Jockey, Drag City, Minty Fresh, Carrot Top, Johann's Face, Atavistic, Pravda, Feel Good All Over, Kranky, and others were supporting original music. Some had stars in their eyes and future stars on their rosters. Others liked their buddy's band and thought a few hundred others might as well. They followed their ears and their hearts; if their brains, some luck, and enough fans followed, so much the better. The pioneering spirit was everywhere. Anyone, we thought, could do it.

As this was happening, music and artists tarred with the "country" brush were unceremoniously consigned to the Not Interested piles at most indie labels. But taking refuge in the bars and clubs where local artists were dipping their country-curious toes into overlooked waters, we thought we were hearing music deserving of some sort of documentation. Seated along a bar rail in the winter of 1993, Old Styles in hand, we grabbed a napkin and quickly made a list of 15 to 20 names. What if, our last-call cogitation went, we brought together under one umbrella artists no one else was showing an interest in? What if – our eyes gleamed – we put them on a CD and released it ourselves? On our own label? It was a brilliant plan. Well, it was a plan, anyway. If nothing else, it might be a good way to cadge some guest-list spots and free drinks around town. It really was that simple, the motivation that genuine.

The author shopping for records at the Maxwell Street Market in 1992, two years before the label he helped start put out its first album, the compilation *For a Life of Sin* ↓


LITT'S
FOR A LIFE OF SIN
A COMPILATION OF INSURGENT CHICAGO COUNTRY

So it came to pass that Eric Babcock, Nan Warshaw, and I started a record label. We each ponied up $2,000 from our wretched day jobs or savings accounts and – *poof* – we were a label. Punk had taught me that I could act, so I *should* act. Thinking about the consequences would only slow us down. The worst that might happen was we'd be left with a pallet of unsold CDs, and I'd go back to repairing squeaky cat doors and painting over bloodstains in cruddy apartments. It was an unexpected turn of events, considering I had moved to Chicago a couple of years prior to get away from the music industry (I had been a stage manager in Detroit, among other roles) after a decade of finding in it kinship and identity, excitement and growth, culminating in burnout and dismay. But music will always surprise you if you let it.

With dewy-eyed zeal, the three of us spent the gloomy early months of 1994 approaching artists around town about giving us a song for our unnamed, untried idea that existed in a smoky, middle-earth space between abstraction and pipe dream. We sought out the kids left off the other teams, the Bad News Bears of the underground, the outsiders of the outsiders. We hung out at my apartment listening to records and cassette demos and going through the club listings in the *Chicago Reader.* We propositioned bands working the club circuit – the Riptones, the Texas Rubies, the first-wave bluegrass/punk/rockabilly outfit Moonshine Willy, and the New Duncan Imperials – that were somewhat established but not part of any identifiable "scene," a few

PHOTOGRAPH: (MILLER) CATHY NOBLE

Photo Illustration by JOE DARROW

side projects, and a couple of groups that were never heard from again.

One night we listened to an LP by the Sundowners, the cowboy trio I had seen on one of my first trips to Chicago. It had this fantastic song on it, “Cigarette State,” a bluegrass-tinged raver with the snarky line of lines: *Alabama’s grand / the state, not the band*. There was respect for form but also totally bent content. Perfect. It was credited to one “Robert William Fulks.” We’d seen “Robbie Fulks” listed at clubs like Deja Vu and Lower Links – it had to be the same guy. We looked up “Fulks, Robert” in the phone book – this was a time when every apartment, no matter how ill furnished, had one lying around somewhere, even if to hold up the three-legged couch – and cold-called. Could we use the song? “Sure,” he said, “but I’ve got my own version.” The deal was sealed.

The Mekons’ Jon Langford, who had moved to the city a few years previous, walked into the original Empty Bottle, where a couple of us were busy at the bar, emptying bottles. We pitched him on participating. With his buccaneer spirit and keen eye for potential mischief, he was in. Within weeks, he delivered “Over the Cliff,” featuring Tony Maimone – the bassist of heroes of my youth Pere Ubu – which etched a sharp line from what we were doing with the label back to what had helped get me there in the first place.

The Handsome Family had given us a four-song demo cassette with a drawing of a raccoon on it and a note with the caveat that they weren’t very “good” yet and didn’t have a lot of material. But I was floored by “Moving Furniture Around,” a song squarely in our sought-for wheelhouse – timeless country pathos updated for an urban environment. With lyrics that had parking tickets and shitty landlords taking the place of coal mines and company stores, a distorted guitar rattling like a cold wind past the semi-abandoned furniture showrooms on Milwaukee Avenue, and a knack for deep-catalog Americana weirdness, they fused the malaise of Kristofferson with the simmering rage of the Pixies. I couldn’t wait to see them live. They had a show at Phyllis’ Musical Inn, one of Nelson Algren’s old Polish Broadway haunts, on an unfashionable stretch of Division Street. Past the well-used bar, with its dusty bottles of DeKuyper schnapps, was a “stage” wedged into the corner. Singer-guitarist Brett Sparks introduced himself and sheepishly told me they were going to suck – *but, you know, enjoy the show*.

I sat at the bar next to a red-haired guy who looked vaguely familiar from Lounge Ax shows. Once the Handsomes started, it was obvious that Brett wasn’t being self-deprecating; they really weren’t very good. Tempos changed mid-song, bass parts wandered off in different directions, and Brett was still learning how to effectively project his dark-as-a-dungeon voice. Ugh. Could I get out of this somehow? I was sitting eight feet from the stage, so it’d be tough to make a stealthy exit. Worse, the guy next to me, now a bit drunk, loved them and wasn’t bashful about expressing it. *What a dummy,* I thought. After the show, I paid vague compliments to the band, thanked them for the tape, and bolted. I’d use the song, but I didn’t think they had much of a future as a band.

The bands we had gathered were glad someone — *anyone* — wanted to document what they were doing.

Messed that one up, didn’t I? The Handsome Family spent the next 25 years putting out some of my favorite albums, exquisitely terrifying and beautiful, the way a decaying, mossy log or a half-awake-at-dawn nightmare can be. Turned out that superfan was the owner of another recently formed local label, Carrot Top Records. I think he signed them that night.

Freakwater and the Bottle Rockets were bands that had already released albums, so we regarded them as seasoned giants in this little field, and they said yes as well. It was a stretch to claim the Rockets as Chicagoans since only their bass player lived here, but fuck it – we were defining our parameters. Furthermore, they were on indie labels, Thrill Jockey and East Side Digital, that we looked at as role models. Having these “heavy hitters” on board, with their critical acclaim, outside-the-area-code tour histories, and “real label” support, might even lend credibility, if only through glancing association, to the project.

Finally, we thought a nod to Chicago’s country music history would provide a narrative arc for those who might think Chicago + Country = Absurd. We included two tracks from the Sundowners. Those guys had helped, unwittingly, coax me to Chicago in the first place, and now it was time to pay them back.

The album was mastered on the sly in a studio in the Harold Washington Library after days of beery debate over a sequence to find a flow, to tell a story in the era before shuffling and streaming. Jon Langford lent us a painting depicting ghostly country music figures, skulls, and a protecting angel for a cover that struck a balance between unsettling and classic, unorthodox and yet somehow familiar. For a main title, we cribbed “For a Life of Sin” from “Lost Highway,” the Hank Williams honky-tonk hymn I had first heard through a cover by a band of reckless Nashville punks, Jason & the Scorchers.

The bands we had gathered were glad someone – *anyone* – wanted to document what they were doing at that place in that time. There was no expectation of a career, no one was trying to “make it,” and no one, but no one, ran home, kicked open the back door, and dragged their S.O. into the boudoir, yelling victoriously, “Prepare for some sweet, sweet lovin’ because I’m on my way to the big time. I’ve been signed by …”

Oh right, we needed a name.

When asked the origin of “Bloodshot,” my go-to answer is that I looked in the

CHICAGO UNCOVERED

PARTIES & PROMOTIONS

EVERYONE STEPPED UP TO THE PLATE AT CHICAGO GOURMET 2025!

Celebrating a fun food & sports theme this year, Chicago Gourmet powered by Invesco QQQ, welcomed thousands of guests September 25-28 for the annual culinary festival plus plenty of pre-gaming during new Culinary World Series summer preview events.

An all-star roster of chefs including hosts Rick Bayless, Marcas Carbajal, Joe Flamm, Sarah Grueneberg, Thai Dang, Stephanie Izard, Karen Akunowicz, Art Smith, Lorena Garcia, Jernard Wells and many more joined food and wine enthusiasts for a delicious lineup of championship-worthy cuisine, wine, spirits, and beer on the Harris Theater Rooftop at Millennium Park and beyond.

Kicking off the main event weekend, Thursday night's popular **Tacos & Tequila** is in a league of its own. The musical **Somm Sessions** luncheon started the day on Friday followed by tasty burgers, cold beer, and more at the evening's **Hamburger Hop** which was then capped off at the new **Asian Late Night Market** after party. Still going strong, Saturday's **Grand Cru** was the GOAT with two sessions showcasing lights-out cuisine from best-of-the-best chefs paired with the very finest wines & spirits. Down the home-stretch on Sunday, the sunny **Rise & Shine Gourmet** brunch event was the perfect closer.

Next season's lineup is already on the books for September 24-27, 2026. For information visit ChicagoGourmet.org.

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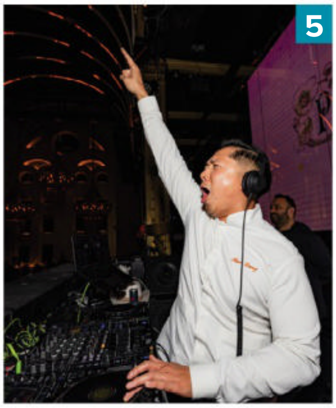
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CHICAGO GOURMET

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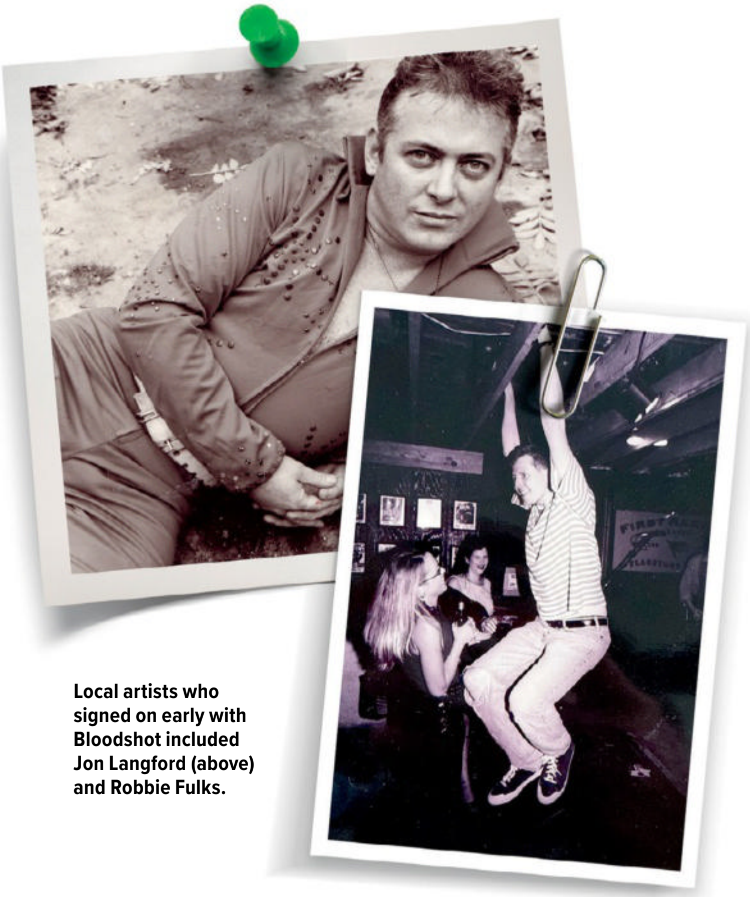
1. Chefs Stephanie Izard and Karen Akunowicz share a toast as they co-host Saturday's **Grand Cru**, presented by UnitedHealthcare® and RATIONAL USA, on September 27, 2025.
2. Serving up delicious tacos, chef Rick Bayless co-hosted **Tacos &Tequila**, presented by US Foods, on September 25, 2025.
3. Leading sommeliers delight guests at the **Somm Sessions** luncheon at Adalina Prime, presented by Southern Glazer's Wine & Spirits, on September 26, 2025.
4. Co-host chefs Joe Flamm & Sarah Grueneberg celebrate with Judges' Choice winner Chef Bob Gallagher and People's Choice winner chefs James Sanders and Nick Kleutsch on September 26, 2025 at the **Hamburger Hop**, presented by Home Grown Program supported by Sysco, DoorDash, and Blue Moon.
5. Host chef Thai Dang kept the Friday night party going at the new **Asian Late Night Market**, presented by TAO Chicago, on September 26, 2025.
6. Guests enjoy the premium wine and spirits at the spectacular afternoon session of the **Grand Cru**.
7. Some of the fabulous cuisine from the award winning chefs at the evening session of the **Grand Cru**.
8. Chef Dominique Leach and a guest take a selfie at Sunday's **Rise & Shine Gourmet**, co-hosted by chefs Art Smith, Lorena Garcia, and Jernard Wells and presented by Performance Foodservice, Kerrygold, and COUNTRY Financial, on September 28, 2025.



Local artists who signed on early with Bloodshot included Jon Langford (above) and Robbie Fulks.

PHOTOGRAPHY: (LANGFORD) CASEY ORR; (FULKS) DANIEL COSTON

mirror one morning and it was yawning back at me. And while a good one-liner is rooted in truth, there was more to it. We brainstormed on themes inherent to country and punk: hard living, rebellious streaks, quotidian hassles and humiliations, and the little guy getting screwed over. I was a fan of Wynonie Harris, the '40s and '50s blues shouter with too little malt shop rock and too much lascivious roll in him for the tastes of parents terrified of fledgling teenage culture and race mixing. His 1951 killer hangover song "Bloodshot Eyes" on King Records rattled around my head: *Don't roll those bloodshot eyes at me / I can tell you've been out on a spree*.

"Bloodshot" it was. It sounded cowboy, but not hick, more renegade.

Since the rare critical language surrounding the melding of roots and punk was either discursive or dismissive, we wanted to plant our black flag and define our own message before someone else hung a horrendous tag on it. We took it for granted that launching this project into an underground rock environment using "country" as a broad characterization would have been outright idiocy. It was a loaded term that would elicit reflexive derision – like a movie description that began "Starring Pauly Shore" – from the very indie music followers, people like us, we thought would be most interested. The entire genre had been cast by many – for often good reasons – down an elevator shaft. We wanted a term that tapped into the kindred feelings of rebelliousness and candor that had drawn me to punk rock initially and that I was finding anew in this music.

And while it is a world of uncertainty and chaos, it is a truism that where there are English majors and beer, there will also be a thesaurus and dictionary nearby. We ran through words like "rebel," "guerrilla," "revolution," and "malcontent" as I dug through the trusty *Roget's* – until "insurgent" caught my eye. It had it all: conviction, purpose, and an antisocial, piratical flourish. Thus, a genre was coined: insurgent country. A British interviewer once commented that it sounded "a bit Woody Guthrie and a bit Sex Pistols." I'm good with that.

Compilation compiled, we sent it off for the mysterious, faraway process of manufacturing. I went back to painting two-flats, drywalling a home office, stripping crown moldings in Old Town, West Town, wherever. And we waited.

What were we looking to accomplish in this city known for blues, industrial music, and razory-guitar indie rock? Maybe we'd sell the CDs. Maybe not. Maybe one day an eccentric Japanese or German completist would find a copy at the back of a used-record store and be thrilled the same way I was when I found a compilation on Detroit's Fortune Records that had Skeets McDonald's "Tattooed Lady" plus, it promised, "Eleven Other SIZZLERS" on it. The question, to the extent it was ever asked by either the artists or us, wasn't "Why do this?" but "Why not?" I was so excited at the prospect of shining a light on this fluky little scene in Chicago that I doubt anyone could have talked me out of it.

In June 1994, a shipment of BS 001 *For a Life of Sin: A Compilation of Insurgent Chicago Country* CDs arrived at the "office" – the dining room table of one of the partners – and a new independent record label launched its first (and we thought last) album. No Champagne was popped, no "We're on our way now" toasts were made. There was a name, a press release, and … now what? What did a label do? Even though Eric had worked at small local indie labels before, Nan had done some freelance promotion and publicity, and I had production writing, reviewing, and college DJ experience, the next step was new and unknown. Forty boxes of plastic discs stacked in the corner? It sure didn't feel like the makings of moguldom, but it was something. We had *made* this. ◼

Excerpted from The Hours Are Long, But the Pay Is Low: A Curious Life in Independent Music *with permission of the University of Illinois Press.* *© 2025 by Rob Miller.*

Photo Illustration by JOE DARROW

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Chicagoans of the Year

FROM EVERYONE'S FAVORITE HIGH SCHOOL CHOIR TO A CERTAIN HOLY FATHER, THESE HONOREES BROUGHT PRIDE TO THIS CITY IN A TUMULTUOUS TIME.

Photography by Clayton Hauck

The Leo High School choir reached the finals of *America's Got Talent*.

The Joyful Singers

Leo High School Choir

BY ADRIENNE SAMUELS GIBBS

When LaDonna Hill brought the Leo High School choir to Southern California in March to audition for NBC's *America's Got Talent*, she had no expectation that the group would get a callback. She had done it as an educational experience for the choir, which hailed from the majority-Black, all-boys Catholic school in Auburn Gresham. After all, Hill – the choir's director for 19 years – never held auditions of her own. All were welcome. "Most of my boys had no musical experience," Hill says.

If you watched *AGT* this season, that might seem hard to believe. Wearing their Leo High School letterman jackets and tees, the choir members charmed viewers across the country with their soulful interpretations of pop-rock anthems and creative choreography. With the city increasingly following their progress as they advanced through multiple auditions and four rounds of competitive live performances, the boys ended up making the finals, where they placed fourth. "Nobody would've thought that we made it, but we did," says Kevin Williams, a 16-year-old junior in the choir.

Impressing notoriously tough judges like Simon Cowell was one thing. ("You're going to inspire so many people," Cowell told the boys at the finale.) But the choir also won the hearts of Chicagoans. This summer, the boys performed at Wrigley Field as part of the Cubs' Juneteenth festivities and at the celebration of Pope Leo XIV at Rate Field. Shining on a national stage, they bolstered civic pride at a time when it is particularly needed. "What people know about the South Side, especially given our current political context, is that it's a 'hellhole,' right?" says Shaka Rawls, the school's principal. "It's been characterized as a war zone by Donald Trump, but what he failed to mention was the 18 boys that went out to California and showed the world who Chicago *actually* is."

Many of the choir members graduated from Leo in the spring, and Hill has since retired. But their performances left a lasting mark on the city. "As soon as you get on the CTA bus or you walk into a store, people recognize that *AGT* Leo jacket," says Williams. "I've had people tell me, 'You bring light to the city, keep going.' "

The Lawyer Who Objected

Rachel Cohen

BY ELLY FISHMAN

Rachel Cohen knows the precise moment something clicked in her. It was a Thursday in March, and the 31-year-old attorney was riding the bus home from the West Loop office of Skadden, the big law firm where she worked as a third-year associate. Scrolling on her phone, she saw a news alert: Paul Weiss, one of the country's most powerful firms, had committed $40 million in pro bono work to causes championed by the Trump administration. In return, the White House dropped an executive order targeting the firm. "I was so infuriated," Cohen recalls. She suspected her own bosses were preparing to do the same, having evaded questions on the topic. "I realized that I needed to lay all this out for people because they were not paying attention or didn't think it's that serious. They needed to see that at least one person thinks it's that serious."

That night, Cohen posted her resignation letter on TikTok. When she woke up the next morning, her video had gone viral (it now has nearly two million views). An email from *PBS News Hour* was waiting in her inbox, asking her to come on the show. Cohen's suspicions about Skadden proved correct: Eight days after her resignation, the firm reached its own agreement with the Trump administration.

In the months since, as many powerful institutions have capitulated to President Trump's demands, Cohen has continued to speak out. She now works part-time at Lowell & Associates, a new firm composed of attorneys who, like Cohen, resigned in protest. And with nearly 400,000 followers across TikTok and Instagram, she has become a loud voice of resistance. When ICE ramped up enforcement in Chicago this fall, Cohen filmed the protests outside the Broadview processing center. Days later, when Illinois filed a lawsuit against the Trump administration to challenge the deployment of the National Guard here, Cohen posted a video breaking down the case.

Now she's thinking about not just how to fight back but what's worth fighting for. In October, she launched American Demands, a national policy initiative articulating a new vision for government. "The most impactful forms of resistance are not going to be about what we don't want," says Cohen, "but instead about what we *do* want."

The Roadside Hero

Earl Abernathy

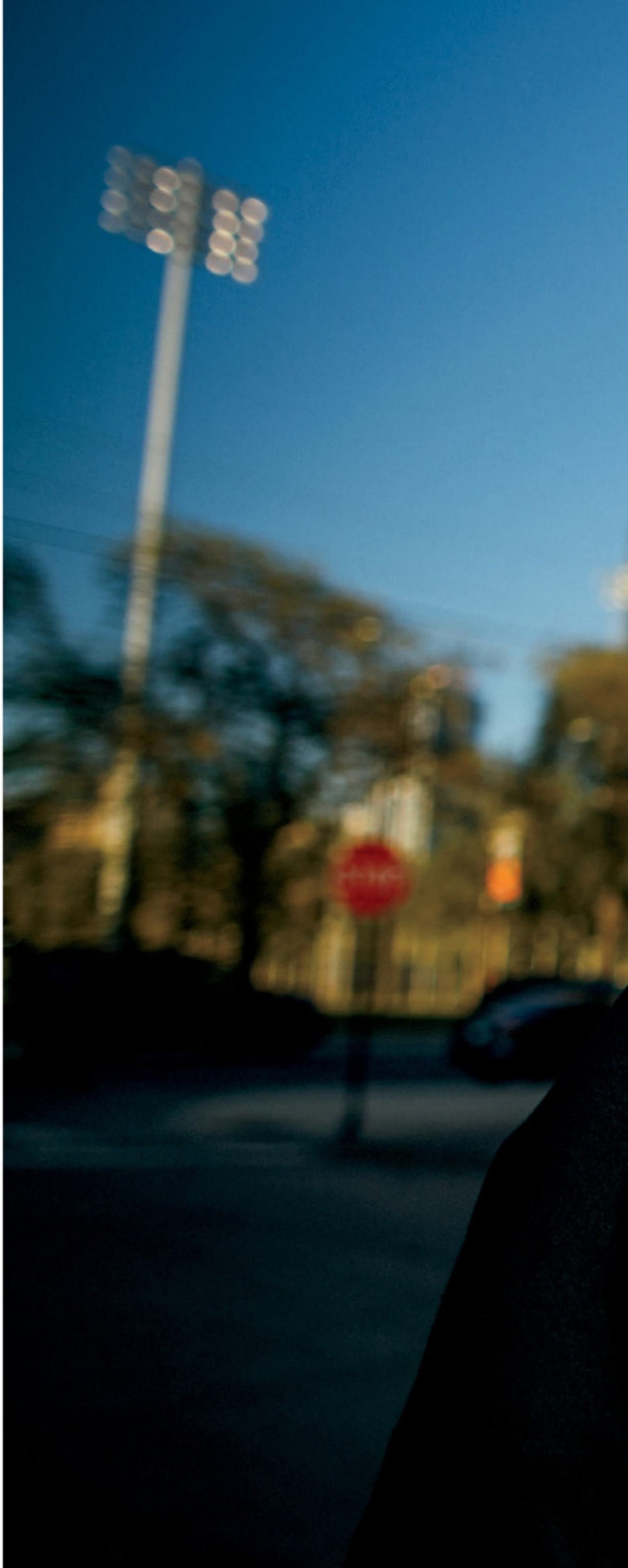
BY MIKE THOMAS

On a sweltering day in July, Earl Abernathy was sitting in traffic, on his way to Sullivan House High School, where he's a counselor and basketball and flag football coach. Abernathy, who had his windows rolled down on account of a busted air conditioner in his 23-year-old van, was driving past St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church on Roosevelt Road in Little Italy when he heard a baby crying. He spotted a car seat on the steps of the church, tipped on its side. A 7-month-old girl was strapped in. No one else had seen her – or at least, no one had bothered to pull over.

Abernathy put his hazard lights on, hurried to the baby, and dialed 911. He also took the next logical-for-2025 step by hopping on Facebook Live and broadcasting his discovery: "Don't nobody recognize this baby?" It worked. He soon heard from the infant's grandmother and aunt. Turned out that the infant had been in a car that was stolen earlier that day from a gas station, and the carjacker had deposited her on the church steps. Thanks to Abernathy, the girl was soon reunited with her family, including a grateful grandmother. "She was calling me, like, every other day, going, 'You're a blessing to my family. I appreciate you.' "

Abernathy, 33, was surprised to see his actions make national news. "I didn't even really think it was going to be a big deal," the Washington Heights resident says. "But people were like, 'Well, it *is* a big deal, because most things we hear about people in our community are bad things.' " Being called a hero, he says, "is actually kind of cool." So are the shout-outs and selfie requests he randomly receives on the street. The recognition even got Abernathy out of a speeding ticket recently. He'd forgotten his driver's license at home, so instead he showed the officer an article about the rescue he'd clipped from the *Sun-Times*.

Even better, his uncle, who had been lending him the old van to get to odd jobs, started a GoFundMe campaign to purchase his nephew reliable transportation. Enough donations poured in to buy a new car: a Jeep Laredo. It's got "a banger music system," Abernathy says. And a working AC.



The Reluctant Immigration Attorney

Maureen Graves

BY HEIDI STEVENS

It was the winter of 2023, and Maureen Graves was looking for a way to help the thousands of migrants who had been bused to Chicago. “I was freaked out sleeping in my warm bed watching people sleep in tents,” she says. She showed up at police stations with coats and blankets and started getting to know some of the families camped out there. A longtime special education lawyer with no experience practicing immigration law, she hadn’t necessarily intended to tap her legal expertise. But she ended up helping a person on the verge of missing their deadline to file for asylum. A few months later, she helped another. And then another. “It’s just very hard to say no to people who do not have alternatives,” Graves, 68, says.

Nearly three years later, as Chicago has become ground zero of a federal anti-immigration blitz, Graves is now an indispensable ally to those caught in the crosshairs. After obtaining a license to practice immigration law, she opened a South Side legal clinic, and by the start of this year, she had made it a full-time operation, relying on a team of volunteers. The majority of asylum seekers are from Venezuela, but the clinic has also helped Ecuadorians, Nicaraguans, Mexicans, and others. (Graves speaks fluent Spanish and some Chinese.) Her clients tell stories of government extortion and torture. Some are gay, putting them at risk of violence. Others are former members of their nation’s military who quit when they were ordered to harm civilians.

She shows up at the clinic at 8 a.m. and often doesn’t leave before 10 p.m. She eats at her desk. She tries to take Sundays off but usually doesn’t. Her efforts have made a difference to those with nowhere else to turn. Since January, the clinic has processed some 500 asylum cases, Graves estimates.

“I never wanted to start any kind of immigration law practice,” she says, “much less a substantial one.” But she can’t ignore what’s happening: “It’s been shocking to see people who are trying to do everything legally go to court and get picked up in court, go to their ICE check-ins and get picked up at an ICE check-in. [The feds] are basically doing the opposite of going after the worst of the worst. They’re going after the most law-abiding people.” Graves, meanwhile, will keep doing her part to try to balance the scales of justice.

The River Guide

Doug McConnell

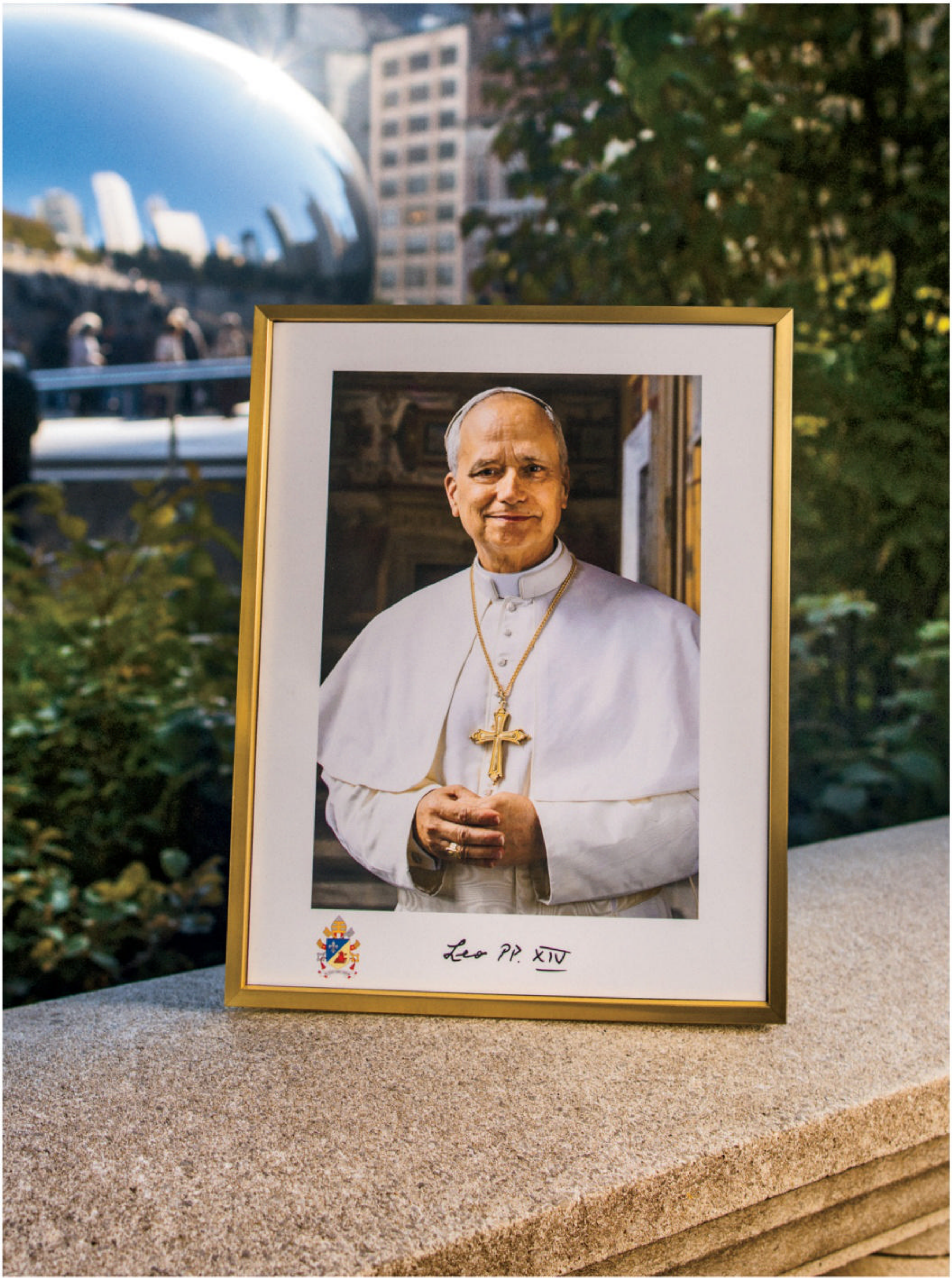
BY STANLEY KAY

It's a beautiful autumn day along the Chicago River. Tour boats, their passengers gawking at the towers of steel on its banks, glide through the water, sunlight dancing on the surface. A train rumbles over the river at Wells Street. "No Swimming," warns a sign at the base of the Clark Street Bridge. Sitting at a waterfront coffee shop, Doug McConnell marvels at the river's transformation. "The Chicago River is the reason the city is here in the first place," he observes. It made Chicago into an industrial behemoth, which turned the river toxic – so toxic that for decades it was too dangerous to swim in.

Not anymore. In September, the Chicago River Swim, the first city-sanctioned group swim in these waters in 98 years, was held. For a river famous for its flow reversal, this was the culmination of another kind of turnaround. It was a moment of triumph for the city – and a day of joy for those who competed in the one- and two-mile races in the heart of the Loop. "So many of the swimmers told me they couldn't stop eyeballing around, kind of sightseeing," says McConnell, the event's organizer.

A Dundee native and investment banker who lives in Barrington, McConnell is a longtime open-water swimmer; the 68-year-old has traversed the English Channel and circumnavigated Manhattan, a route that includes the once-filthy East River. ("The Chicago River tastes better," he quips.) But it isn't just the thrill of a challenge that fuels him – it's also tragedy. After his father died from ALS in 2006 and his sister Ellen was diagnosed with the disease a few months later (she died in 2018), the siblings launched A Long Swim, a foundation that has raised $3 million for ALS research at Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine's Ozdinler Lab.

The Chicago River Swim was years in the making. McConnell can't take credit for cleaning up the water, but he spearheaded the labyrinthine effort to get all the approvals for a competition. On race day, which generated $100,000 for ALS research and $50,000 to teach kids in underserved neighborhoods how to swim, he was moved by the sight of so many people splashing around in water deemed safe for swimming after weeks of meticulous testing leading up to the event. "I'm not usually a get-tears-in-the-eyes kind of guy, but that day I got tears in my eyes." Once again, the Chicago River belonged to the people.


Leo PP. XIV

The Homegrown Pontiff

Pope Leo XIV

BY BARRY PEARCE

Like millions around the world, I watched white smoke billow from the Sistine Chapel on May 8 with a mix of bemusement and morbid fascination. (I'd watched the movie *Conclave* a couple of weeks earlier, so my interest in all things papal was piqued.) Back in the day, the smoke signal was a genius way to quickly communicate that a conclave had chosen a new pope – the original tweet. In the age of X and Instagram, which the new pope could access from his ever-present Apple Watch, the pomp seemed silly. A *televised* smoke signal? Why not skip the middleman?

My eye-rolling stopped when I heard the new pope's hometown. Chicago? Really? Despite being a Catholic so lapsed I can lap the other lapses without breaking a sweat, I found myself giggling like a schoolboy and shaking my head, not in cynicism but wonder, maybe even pride, as I heard about Robert "Call Me Leo" Prevost.

Newscasters quickly dug into Pope Leo's Chicago roots: born in the city, raised in south suburban Dolton, altar boy at St. Mary of the Assumption on the Far South Side, student at the Catholic Theological Union in Hyde Park. NBC-5's Mary Ann Ahern, reporting from Rome, was the first Chicagoan I heard claim a personal connection: She'd nabbed a quick interview with the future pontiff after his predecessor's conclave 12 years earlier.

I didn't know then that Ahern was kicking off an intense game of Six Degrees of Pope Leo. Every week I heard new connections. My buddy Jon was an altar boy for Father Flach at St. Bede's while he lived in the same house as Father Prevost! Probably. Another friend's sister knows three people who knew Prevost when he lived here – *three*! Another friend was at Von Steuben High School, where Leo's mom was a librarian! Does he remember her? Well, no, they didn't overlap, but still!

Why were Chicagoans of all stripes, Catholic and non, so eager to claim a connection? One reason, of course, is clout. No city has a better grasp of influence and connections, the potential long-term advantage of knowing a guy who knows a guy. We perfected earthly clout and now hope we have the heavenly version on our side. Who knows what the Big Guy might turn a blind eye to after a word from our homeboy?

The purely associative thrill is another obvious factor. A connection to someone important, however tenuous, makes us feel important. This partly explains the flurry of memes making the rounds: "Chicago-Style Pope," featuring Leo as a hot dog; Leo clutching an Italian beef and bottle of Malört; and, my favorite, the *SNL* Superfans in Bears regalia and miters, captioned "Da Prayers."

Another motive for the memes and source of their humor, though, is the incongruity of it all. Rome, Holy See, Sistine Chapel, Michelangelo, and … Bob from Chicago? We're a city of steel, not gold; crust, not crimson; Jewels, not jewels. Like another South Sider who defied the odds to reach the greatest heights of power, Father Bob was an unlikely candidate, the underdog, and we're all about the underdog. The Second City loves the little guy who punches above his weight.

I've heard many locals say, "He's one of us." By this, we mean a Chicagoan, sure, but also an ordinary guy from a working-class neighborhood, with grandparents who emigrated from Europe on his dad's side and roots in Black Creole Louisiana and the Caribbean on his mom's. What could be more Chicago? Pope Leo, the son of a schoolteacher and a librarian, *gets it*, we think. He understands poverty and racism, the strength of diversity, the pain of migration, and the dignity due all work.

Of course a pope from the City of Big Shoulders, the home of the Haymarket Affair and the Pullman Strike, named himself "Leo." No city has fought harder for workers' rights, and Father Bob's eponym, Leo XIII, was called "the Pope of the Workers" because he championed living wages, safe workplaces, and the right to organize during the Second Industrial Revolution.

As we teeter on the edge of the Fourth Industrial Revolution and the prospect of artificial intelligence gobbling jobs like a generous alderman, we're comforted by Leo's early rejection of an AI pope that would have – this is for real – granted virtual papal audiences. "If there's anybody who should not be represented by an avatar, I would say the pope is high on the list," he told biographer Elise Allen.

The infamous hot dog joint on Clark Street, the Wiener's Circle, had one of the best claims of a Leo connection posted on its sign shortly after that white smoke appeared: *Canes nostros ipse comedit*, Latin for "He has eaten our dogs."

Has he?

On a literal level, I can't say, but figuratively, yes, Father Bob has eaten our dogs. He has walked in our shoes. He has smelled the stench of our factories, lived in the shadows of our now-shuttered steel mills, seen the scourge of white flight, watched the corruption of our politicians, and – I can almost guarantee – honked for our picketers on strike. He is one of us, unifying Augustine's City of God and the City on the Make, bedfellows less strange than they first seem.

A dash of machine savvy will come in handy as Leo rules over the world's largest church, a job that would challenge even Old Man Daley's powers of organization and patronage. Chicagoans, Catholic or otherwise, will watch with pride, confident Leo is looking out for us and ready to dole out the holy clout we might one day need.

I can just see Peter greeting us at the pearly gates, removing a cigar in the manner of a wary ward committeeman to warn, "We don't want nobody nobody sent."

Slyly, we'll look around, lean in, and whisper, "Leo." ■

The Making of Risky Business

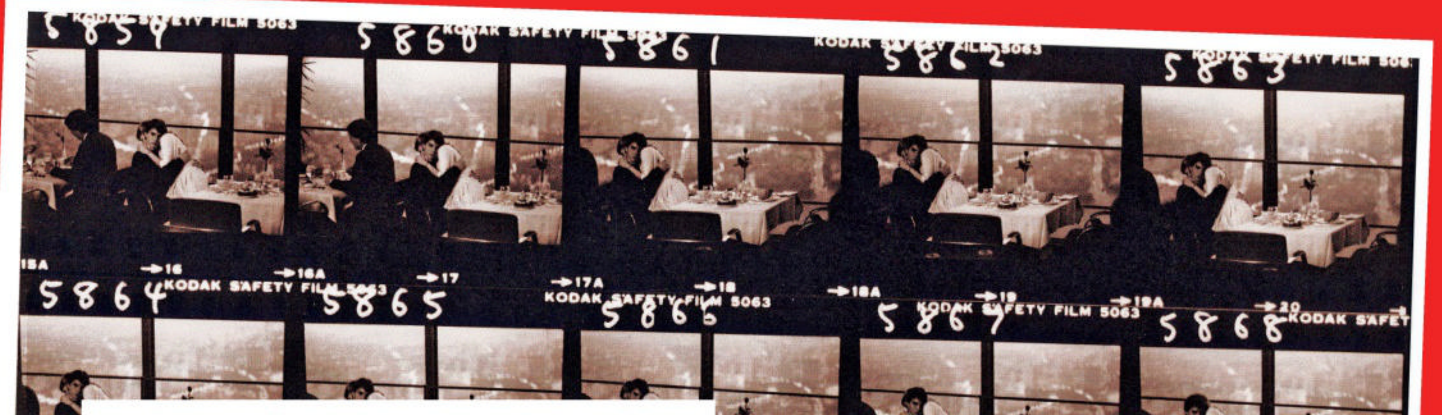
FORTY-TWO YEARS AFTER THE FILM'S RELEASE, THE CAST AND CREW RECALL THE CREATION OF A NORTH SHORE COMING-OF-AGE CLASSIC—AND THE BIRTH OF A HOLLYWOOD MEGASTAR.

BY JAKE MALOOLEY

RISKY BUSINESS

By

Paul Brickman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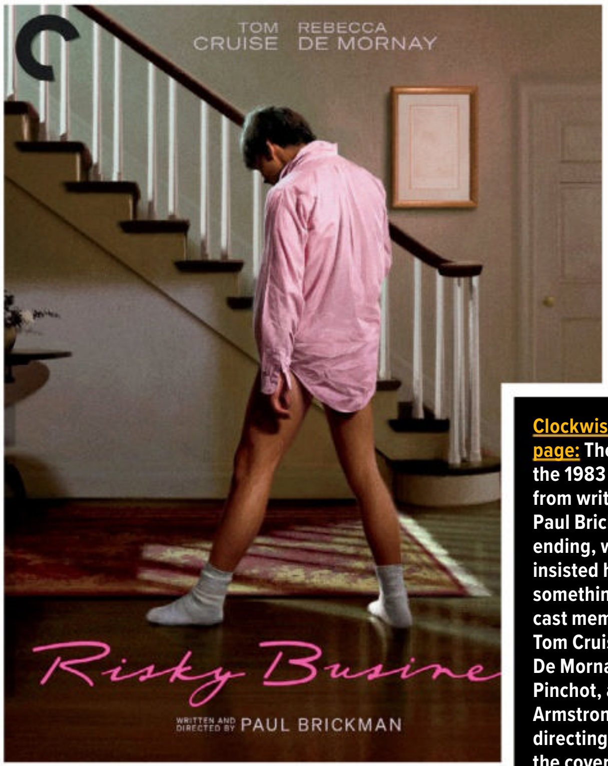

TOM CRUISE
REBECCA DE MORNAY
Risky Busine
WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY PAUL BRICKMAN

Clockwise from opposite page: The script from the 1983 movie; frames from writer-director Paul Brickman's original ending, which the studio insisted he change to something more upbeat; cast members (from left) Tom Cruise, Rebecca De Mornay, Bronson Pinchot, and Curtis Armstrong; Brickman directing his leads; the cover of the Criterion Collection's 2024 Blu-ray release, featuring Cruise's iconic sock-slide scene.

For Paul Brickman, the dream was always the same: to make a film for the youth of the 1980s that was smart and stylish and seductive. *The Graduate* for the Reagan era.

While working as a Hollywood screenwriter in the late '70s, the Highland Park native (son of syndicated *Chicago Daily News* and *Sun-Times* cartoonist Morrie Brickman) clashed with Jonathan Demme and other directors he felt weren't fully realizing his material. Brickman quickly came to believe that if he ever wanted to see his unspoiled vision rendered on the big screen, he would have to not only write a cracking script but direct the picture himself.

Sometimes you gotta say, "What the fuck," make your move. That seize-the-moment mantra has become one of the most quoted lines from *Risky Business*. It was also Brickman's attitude as he set out for a rented cabin in a mountain town outside Los Angeles to write the film. He channeled his North Shore upbringing for the world of Joel Goodsen, a "white boy off the lake" (Glencoe, to be exact) so concerned about jeopardizing his future that he can't have a guilt-free erotic fantasy, let alone actual sex. That is, until his parents go out of town and he has a fateful rendezvous with a Chicago call girl named Lana, who turns out to be the ultimate capitalist – and, for Joel, a masterful teacher of what he calls "the shameless pursuit of immediate gratification."

As Brickman and producer Jon Avnet sought to sell studios on their coming-of-age art film – one that carried a broader social critique of the era's unbridled capitalism and the toll it was exacting on young people – they bumped up against the vagaries of commercialism: companies interested in financing only vacuous teen sex comedies like the hit du jour, *Porky's*, as well as a powerful executive who, at the eleventh hour, would force Brickman to compromise his vision.

Nevertheless, the movie became a surprise hit of 1983, and a relatively little-known 21-year-old actor named Tom Cruise made an instantly iconic slide in his socks and skivvies into the consciousness of the moviegoing public. As for Brickman, in the wake of *Risky Business*'s success, he turned down the chance to direct such films as *Rain Man* and *Forrest Gump* and helmed only one other feature, 1990's underrated *Men Don't Leave*, before all but vanishing from Hollywood.

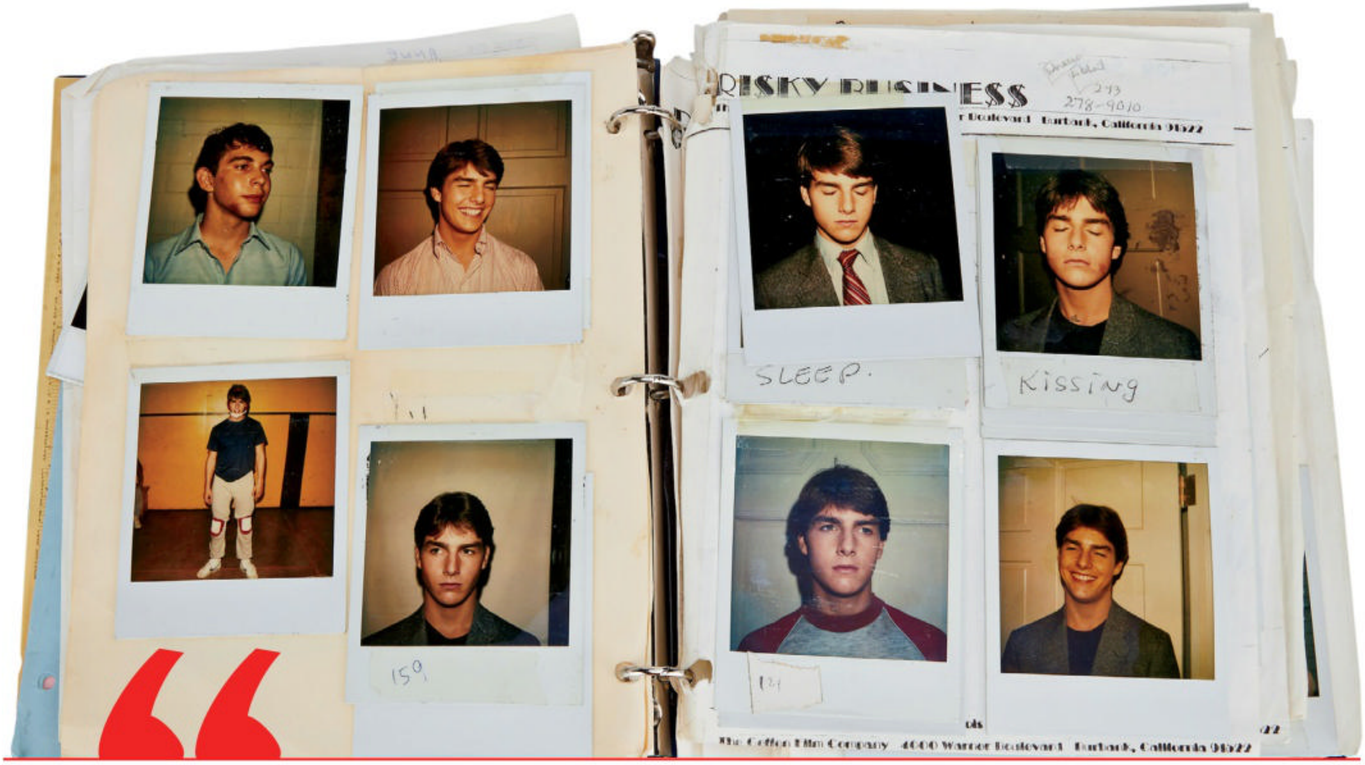
For this behind-the-scenes account of the making of *Risky Business*, I talked to more than two dozen members of the cast and crew – virtually every major figure except the guarded Cruise. They recalled their extended residence during the summer of '82 at the since-demolished Purple Hotel in Lincolnwood, Cruise and costar Rebecca De Mornay's on- and off-camera boffing, the Method-acting mischief of a visiting Sean Penn, and even a brush with death on Michigan Avenue.

Opposite page, from top: Polaroids of Cruise (except top left) in character from the production continuity book; Cruise with castmates (from left) Sarah Partridge, Kevin Anderson, Raphael Sbarge, and Bronson Pinchot.

The reclusive Brickman, who admits he's "from the J.D. Salinger school," has given few interviews. He once sent me a bulleted list to explain why he avoids talking to journalists. He didn't even do an interview with the Criterion Collection, which last year put out a restored edition of *Risky Business* that includes a version with his original ending. But Brickman, now 76, has been exceptionally responsive to my long-held fascination with his one hit. His words here are drawn from a recent conversation of ours, as well as one we had on *Risky Business*'s 30th anniversary in 2013 (portions of which were first published in *Salon*).

Now, to quote Lana's advice to Joel: Go learn something.

IMAGE SOURCES: *PREVIOUS SPREAD* (SCRIPT) JULIEN'S AUCTIONS; (FILM, BRICKMAN DIRECTING) PAUL BRICKMAN; (CAST MEMBERS) OAKLAND UNIVERSITY ARCHIVES, CURTIS ARMSTRONG PAPERS; (BLU-RAY COVER) THE CRITERION COLLECTION


RISKY BUSINESS
278-9010
Burbank, California 91522
SLEEP.
KISSING
159
124
The Geffen Film Company 4000 Warner Boulevard Burbank, California 91522

Chicago is set up well for *Risky Business*, because you have the relative safety of the North Shore suburbs and you have the train line, which was a theme, connecting to adventure and darker elements in the city.

IMAGE SOURCES: (POLAROIDS) JULIEN'S AUCTIONS; (CASTMATES) ENTERTAINMENT PICTURES/ALAMY

I

“Let’s get this made”

PAUL BRICKMAN (writer-director): Chicago is set up well for *Risky Business*, because you have the relative safety of the North Shore suburbs and you have the train line, which was a theme, connecting to adventure and darker elements in the city. That’s the journey Joel takes. It was an exploration of things not only geographically but of the darker side of himself.

JON AVNET (producer): Shooting the film in Chicago was always the idea. Paul was familiar with it, and that was very, very helpful.

BRICKMAN: The exterior of Joel’s house is three minutes from the house where I grew up. Shelton’s Ravinia Grill, where Joel and his friends talk about their futures, is where I used to hang out after walking home from school in the eighth grade. We’d go there and throw french fries at each other. Part of the car chase sequence with Guido, the killer pimp, goes by the Highland Park Theater, where I saw movies as a kid. The bank where the guys take money out to pay the call girls – I opened up an account there when I was 7.

AVNET: The way I met Paul was I was producing my first film for Paramount. It needed a rewrite. I had read some of Paul’s stuff and thought he was a really good writer. So I asked him if he would take a look. He read it and said, “How much time do you have?” I said, “Two weeks.” He said, “I don’t think I could fix this in two *years*.” I went, Oh, I like this guy. We had lunch at Paramount shortly thereafter, and he mentioned the idea for *Risky Business*. I said, “I would love to be involved with that, if you think I could be of value.” Several months after our lunch, I got a call from Paul on the weekend. He said, “Remember that project? Would you read it?” I said, “Of course. Send it over on Monday.” He said, “Would you mind if I brought it up to your house now?” That was unusual. So he came up. I said, “Why don’t you walk around the house while I read?” And he said, “Would you mind if I read it to you?” When he finished, I said, “Well, Paul, this is certainly the best script I’ve read in a long time. What do you need me for?” He said, “I can’t finish it.” After about an hour or so of talking, it was clear to me a lot of what I could do for him was just be a third party who could say, “Look, this is good!” So we decided that I would be a producer.

BRICKMAN: While I was developing the script, I interviewed some call girls from the Midwest. They were so young. And what was sad was how optimistic they were about where they were going and what they’d be able to afford in life. I was looking at these girls, thinking, You don’t get it; you’re headed for trouble.

> “What I was inspired by greatly was Bernardo Bertolucci’s *The Conformist*, which I thought was beautifully rendered. I thought, Why can’t you present that as a film for youth and aspire to that kind of style and still have humor in it?”

AVNET: About eight or nine months of work later, Paul had finished the script. I said, “OK, let’s get this made.” At that time I was in partnership with Steve Tisch, so our company would be the producing entity with Paul.

BRICKMAN: I developed the project at Warner Bros. Upon reading the script, they passed and put it into “turnaround.” The working title was *White Boys Off the Lake*. I think the studio rejected that because it sounded like an off-Broadway play. So we started doing word association to come up with a new title. Jon and I shopped the film all over Hollywood. It was turned down everywhere.

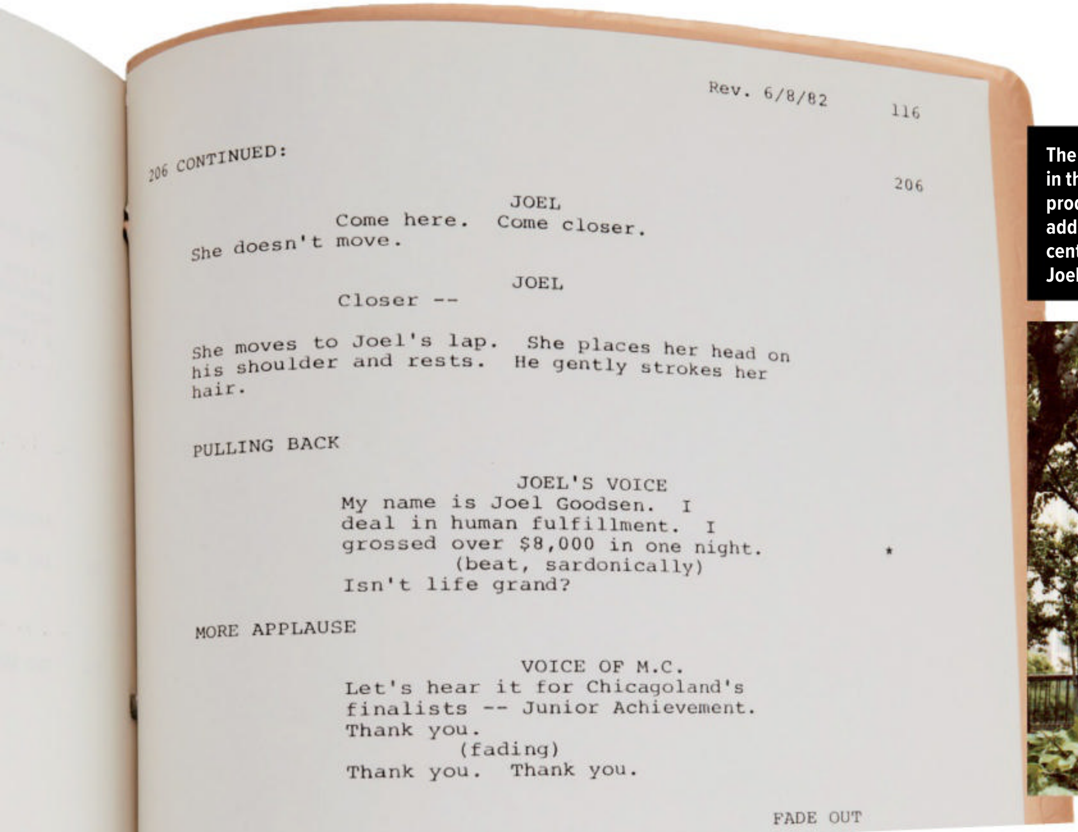
AVNET: The thing we were competing with, through the commercial lens of the studios, was that *Porky’s* had been successful.

BRICKMAN: I had no interest in doing that kind of film. What I was inspired by greatly was Bernardo Bertolucci’s *The Conformist*, which I thought was beautifully rendered. I thought, Why can’t you present that as a film for youth and aspire to that kind of style and still have humor in it? That was the test: to meld that darker form of filmmaking with humor and a strong narrative. We were just about out of options when an entertainment attorney and friend, Peter Benedek, connected us with the nascent Geffen Film Company. I had lunch with David Geffen and he said, “Let’s make it.” After the production, we ended up gifting Joel’s mother’s crystal egg to Peter. He still has it.

AVNET: David responded to the quality of the writing. He saw the humor in it, and he was not put off by the sexuality. And it was no small irony that David’s deal was at Warner Bros., so he was bringing the film back to a studio that had passed on it, but he had total control. So that began the journey. It would be quite a journey.

IMAGE SOURCES: (SCRIPT) JULIEN’S AUCTIONS; (PARK) PAUL BRICKMAN; (RESTAURANT) ENTERTAINMENT PICTURES/ALAMY

The original script (left) ended with the scene in the restaurant at the Hancock (bottom). At producer David Geffen's behest, Brickman added a park scene (below, with Brickman at center, directing) that hinted at a future for Joel and Lana's relationship.



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206 CONTINUED: 206

JOEL
Come here. Come closer.

She doesn't move.

JOEL
Closer --

She moves to Joel's lap. She places her head on his shoulder and rests. He gently strokes her hair.

PULLING BACK

JOEL'S VOICE
My name is Joel Goodsen. I deal in human fulfillment. I grossed over $8,000 in one night. *
(beat, sardonically)
Isn't life grand?

MORE APPLAUSE

VOICE OF M.C.
Let's hear it for Chicagoland's finalists -- Junior Achievement.
Thank you.
(fading)
Thank you. Thank you.

FADE OUT

II

"There they are"

AVNET: David said from the beginning, "It's your movie, Paul." But he was always going to have approval over the casting of Joel and Lana.

NANCY KLOPPER (casting director): David wouldn't greenlight the movie until he felt we had Joel and Lana. A huge swath of up-and-coming young actors on both coasts came in and read for Joel: Kevin Bacon, Sean Penn, John Cusack, Matthew Broderick. The same for Lana. We approached Michelle Pfeiffer, and she passed because she felt the film glamorized prostitution. Daryl Hannah also passed.

AVNET: We had seen virtually every single young actor of the day – Tom Hanks, Diane Lane.

KLOPPER: Jon and Paul then went to Chicago to continue the search there, and I stayed in New York and kept digging. They came out of Chicago telling me, "We met these two really special, incredible local actors" – Kevin Anderson and Megan Mullally.

KEVIN ANDERSON (Chuck, one of Joel's friends): I was *so* Joel. I had grown up in Gurnee, which is like 20 miles from where the movie takes place. I think Paul liked that. When Great America came to town, I was a sophomore in high school, and that was my first job: I was Bugs Bunny and other Warner Bros. characters. I read with Megan. We really connected, and they just loved us. We were flown out to L.A. on Easter Sunday in 1982 to screen-test for the two leads.

KLOPPER: I remember sitting in the screening room, watching their screen tests with Paul. At the end, he said, “Well, Klop, what do you think?” And I said, “I don’t think we have them.” Paul said, “I think you’re right.” David Geffen agreed. That was a crushing moment, but we had to be honest. You look at actors up on the big screen, and they either jump out at you or they don’t. It had been months of work, and we were back to the drawing board. [Anderson ended up cast as one of Joel’s friends, and Mullally was given a minor role as a call girl.]

AVNET: For Lana, we needed to cast the kind of woman that a teenager from the North Shore would do anything to be with.

KLOPPER: Lana had to be gorgeous and tough – and she also had to have a vulnerability. You had to care about her, and you had to understand why Joel would risk everything for her while his parents were out of town. I called [actor] Harry Dean Stanton, who I knew a bit. He always had beautiful women around him. He recommended Rebecca De Mornay. She had a very minor role in Francis Ford Coppola’s *One From the Heart*. That’s where he met her, and they were together at the time.

REBECCA DE MORNAY (Lana): I was living at Harry Dean Stanton’s place. One day there was this script sitting on his couch. I saw the name: *Risky Business*. He was going to read for Guido, the pimp. Something about the title *Risky Business* just seemed like that was for me. So I laid down and read it. I had this overwhelming feeling about Lana: This is my part.

KLOPPER: Rebecca came in, and she was very raw, very unformed as an actor. But she did have a quality about her that made her seem wiser than her years, as if she had been through a lot. And she was sexy. She came back the next day and read for Paul and Jon.

AVNET: We had interviewed call girls of all different natures, and control was a big factor for why they did the job – liking to have control. There was a street quality, a toughness that made Rebecca feel believable.

DE MORNAY: I had lived by my wits in London for about a year before I got to L.A., waiting tables illegally without a green card and performing as a singer with bands. There was a strain in me, similar to Lana, of a deep melancholy about injustice within the system of capitalism. That’s why *Risky Business* is so affecting – it is a commentary on social injustice, on how the machine is oiled for certain people. Lana is the underdog of society, and I related to that. I related to the dignity that she carried herself with, even though she was a prostitute.

KLOPPER: Within a day or two of seeing Rebecca, we got a call from Creative Artists Agency that Tom Cruise was in Oklahoma filming *The Outsiders* with Francis Ford Coppola but was coming into L.A. for a day and could we see him. We were like, “Of course.” He came in and he was very much in character for *The Outsiders*.

> “When we saw Tom, there was initially some trepidation because he looked like an Oklahoma greaser. Everybody was going, ‘That’s not the way a suburban kid from the North Shore of Chicago would look.’”

AVNET: When we saw Tom, there was initially some trepidation because he looked like an Oklahoma greaser. He had a chipped tooth, big muscles, tattoos, greasy hair. Everybody was going, “That’s not the way a suburban kid from the North Shore of Chicago would look.”

KLOPPER: We always did the opening monologue: “The dream is always the same …” He did it just like it was in the film – so great. Then I read with him for a couple of the scenes between Joel and Lana. He was terrific. When I first met Paul, he said, “What we’re looking for is Dustin Hoffman in *The Graduate*” – a young guy who is both a sexy leading man but also has a great sense for dark comedy writing, and Tom had that combination. He knew where the jokes were. He was sexy. He got all the irony.

BRICKMAN: When Tom came in, I was comfortable with him right away. I felt he embodied the role really well. I thought, Here’s a guy I can work with really easily. He appreciated the humor in the piece, and I thought that he would give a very credible performance, and you’d really believe the character. Tom is very expressive physically. That’s one of his strong suits as an actor. There’s a lot of body language going on with his performances. It serves him well, and it helped him in *Risky Business*.

AVNET: Tom’s audition was singular. He would literally, in the middle of a reading, stop himself and say, “No, let me try this,” and then he would make an adjustment. He controlled the audition – and it wasn’t in an arrogant way. It was in a way of searching for the character. He had ideas. Part of what Paul liked about Tom was that Tom brought stuff to the table. Paul wanted a collaborator.

KLOPPER: Tom had to fly right back to *The Outsiders*, but we wanted to test him with Rebecca. So we arranged on a weekend for him to fly back to L.A.

AVNET: We scheduled a screen test at dawn at Steve Tisch's house in the Hollywood Hills, with me working the video camera and Steve doing sound.

DE MORNAY: Tom flew into L.A. for our 6 a.m. screen test. I got up at 2 in the morning to get all my makeup on and get ready. Tom walked in, and he looked kind of disheveled. There was no real spark between us. I leaned into him and said, "Tom, you know what this is, right?" He said, "What do you mean?" I said, "This is the chemistry test, so we gotta get some chemistry going – fast." I saw a light go on in his eyes. He was going to follow what I said. A connection happened in that moment.

KLOPPER: We felt definite for the first time: OK, there they are. We sent the tape to David Geffen, who said, "Go make your movie."

DE MORNAY: After I was cast, Paul took me into his car, and he played me the Phil Collins song "In the Air Tonight." He said, "This is the mood for the movie." It was exactly what I'd envisioned: a melancholy, aching love.

III

"What kind of name is Cruise?"

AVNET: David Geffen came to town only once, because he didn't like the casting of Joe Pantoliano to play Guido, the pimp. We thought Pantoliano was perfect because he was menacing in a weaselly way.

JOE PANTOLIANO (Guido): Geffen was saying, "He doesn't remind me of any pimp I know!" But Steve Tisch, Paul Brickman, and Jon Avnet all dug their heels in and protected me.

DE MORNAY: Tom and I were brought in two weeks prior to shooting for rehearsal. Paul had us also do theater games with each other to find our dynamic. That really helped cement my leadership role over Tom's character. He had to be one step behind me all the time, and yet that is not something that is second nature to Tom Cruise. He likes to steer the ship. So it was interesting maintaining that leadership role, letting him know we're going to do things the way I want them done. That dynamic had to work in the film.

Above: Actor Joe Pantoliano says Brickman told him, "I want Guido to be a *likable* pimp." Left: Cruise and Armstrong in costume for the wrestling scene.

IMAGE SOURCES: (PANTOLIANO) THE CRITERION COLLECTION; (CRUISE AND ARMSTRONG) OAKLAND UNIVERSITY ARCHIVES, CURTIS ARMSTRONG PAPERS

CURTIS ARMSTRONG (Miles, one of Joel's friends): When I found out the production schedule we would have in Chicago, the producers also told me Tom Cruise would be playing Joel. I'd never heard of Tom Cruise. I was scribbling all this stuff down, and I spelled his name Crewes. I thought it impossible that anyone would actually have the name Cruise.

BRONSON PINCHOT (Barry, one of Joel's friends): I remember saying, "What kind of name is Cruise? Like cruising in a car?"

ARMSTRONG: The rehearsal process that Paul Brickman had come up with initially involved all of the guys who were playing friends – Tom Cruise and Bronson Pinchot and Kevin Anderson and Raphael Sbarge and me – being picked up in a van and driven to a suburban Chicago shopping mall, and we would be left for the day at the mall. Paul's theory was that we were supposed to be high school kids who were on the verge of going off to college, so we should be doing the things that high school boys do when they're hanging out, which is go to the mall and the record store and the hamburger joint.

PINCHOT: Tom and I realized right away we were incredibly different. I had just graduated magna cum laude from Yale, and – did Tom go to college? He was interested in *Pac-Man*, and I was interested in Thomas Hardy.

RAPHAEL SBARGE (Glenn, one of Joel's friends): Tom had attended a Catholic seminary. He was literally planning to become a priest, and he had taken this left turn. He had already done *Taps* and *The Outsiders*, but only *Taps* had come out.

ARMSTRONG: The main thing I noticed was Tom referred to me as Miles. He called everyone by their character name. At the time I didn't know whether that was part of his process as an actor or just that he didn't know my name.

CURTIS ARMSTRONG

BRONSON PINCHOT

PINCHOT: Tom called me Barry. You think, Are you dead serious? Just turn it on when it's time to turn it on! I had never been exposed to a Method actor before. I think it was something he picked up from Sean Penn, whom he idolized.

ANDERSON: I lived in Old Town at the time. I split the second floor of a house for 50 bucks a month. I would take the L up to Skokie, and then get on a bus to get to the set. I was so green, just out of acting school. The other guys seemed so accomplished and loose. Bronson and Curtis had acted onstage in New York. Curtis was the coolest of all of us. His character, Miles, was the one who says, "Sometimes you gotta say, 'What the fuck,'" and Curtis was like that in real life.

PINCHOT: They housed all of us in a funny purple Hyatt in Lincolnwood – this dopey little hotel with vinyl wallpaper.

ARMSTRONG: We were kept there for the entire run of the film, which was 11 weeks or something. There were weeks where I wasn't shooting. I was just hanging out at the hotel. We would all get together at the hotel in the evening, or in the morning if we had an all-night shoot.

SBARGE: We couldn't risk tanning, because we had to match for continuity. So we were often stuck in the hotel, bored as shit.

ARMSTRONG: I went past Tom's room one night, and there was literally a line of young women outside. It was sort of baffling to me because I didn't know who Tom Cruise was. How somebody who wasn't famous managed to get this following was beyond me.

PINCHOT: Word had gotten out among the teenage girls who loved him from *Taps* that he was at the hotel. So there were lumpy teens sitting as if they were waiting to go into an audition or a dental appointment, with their backs against the wall, just sitting there cross-legged, doodling.

ARMSTRONG: There was a lot of partying going on. It was a period of experimentation. I was probably drinking more than doing coke. It was mostly motivated by boredom. When you have a lot of time on your hands and you're in a situation where there's a lot of that going on, it can be a problem.

De MORNAY: The scene at the hotel was the most fun. It was summer, with a group of young actors living together, drinking at the hotel bar, playing a lot of *Pac-Man*. There were little trysts happening here and there.

SBARGE: Harry Dean Stanton was there with Rebecca, and even Harry would be playing *Pac-Man*.

ARMSTRONG: We were all in awe of Harry. He was the actor's actor. He was an amazing swimmer, that guy. He would be in the hotel pool, and I would watch him swimming laps for hours. You'd think that maybe he'd gotten out at some point, but then you'd see that his towel was perfectly dry and folded next to the pool.

RICK LeFEVOUR (stuntman): Tom was without a car during the production. So I took him out a couple of times. I was 26 or 27, he was 20. There was a Bennigan's in the Old Orchard shopping center. I'd order a pitcher of beer and get him a glass.

SBARGE: One of the nights we went out, Tom was behind the wheel. We were driving down Michigan Avenue, and we got a little open road. So he was like, "Let's fucking floor it." He hit the gas, and we were going as fast as the vehicle could go. We were laughing, having a good time, and suddenly the light started to change and a huge truck pulled into the intersection. We were headed right for this fucking truck. And like out of a movie,

IMAGE SOURCE: PAUL BRICKMAN

Tom did a hard right turn, missed the truck, hit the brakes, and squealed the car to a stop into a parking spot on the right side of the road. Then he turns to me and gives me one of those huge Tom Cruise smiles. I was like, "Oh my God!" We almost didn't make it that night.

IV

"That was a hugely ballsy thing to do"

AVNET: The interiors were shot mostly at a defunct high school in Skokie called Niles East. We built the sets in the school's gymnasium.

LeFEVOUR: John Hughes later used the same old high school for *Sixteen Candles*.

AVNET: The first line in the film is "The dream is always the same," and it was very much a conceit of Paul's for the film to have the look of a dream. The first cinematographer was Peter Sova. He had done *Diner*, which we thought was a very good movie. But we hated his lighting. He would light the exteriors with big cranes with flat light coming down. It just looked so fake, so Hollywood. I said, "We've got to get rid of him," and we did.

NICHOLAS PRYOR (Mr. Goodsen, Joel's father): That was a hugely ballsy thing to do, because Paul hadn't directed anything, but he wasn't getting what he wanted.

AVNET: We brought in Reynaldo Villalobos, who did a really good job. He lit with China balls that had a certain quality of light. It was very effective and essential. Rey had to leave, and we ended up with Bruce Surtees, otherwise known as the Prince of Darkness, who shot the last third.

BRICKMAN: Visually, I do appreciate something stylized, something abstract, when possible. Or, occasionally, something overromanticized, like wind and leaves blowing a door open.

RICHARD CHEW (film editor): Paul was so confident in his style and camera placement. Early in the film, he has a sequence where Joel's parents are giving him instructions before they leave town – and it was all done from Joel's point of view. It was showing the parents as alien to the world of a teenager. When the dailies came in and I looked at that, I thought, Fuck, man, this guy is bold.

PANTOLIANO: Brickman was diligent about every detail. That scene where I say to Tom, "In a sluggish economy, never, ever fuck with another man's livelihood" – during one take, I had a toothpick in my mouth. At one point, I took out the toothpick and put it under Tom's neck, threateningly. After the take, Paul came up to me and said, "Listen, I don't want you to do the toothpick. I want all the characters in this movie to be liked, and by doing that, you cross the line. I want Guido to be a *likable* pimp."

WILLIAM DAMBRA (assistant prop master): The prop master on *Risky Business* was Jack Ackerman. He was an old guy who had worked as a kid wagging the tail on the lion from *The Wizard of Oz* with a fishing line. Jack goes, "We want to throw a pair of sunglasses on Tom Cruise." So I run to the prop truck.

BRICKMAN: We were about to shoot the opening and closing shot in the backyard when my prop man showed me all the sunglasses in his kit. Nothing worked for me. So at lunch, Cruise and I hopped in my car and raced to the nearest optician in Wilmette. We tried on a bunch of pairs. I picked the Ray-Bans. I thought they looked both cool and comical on him.

V

"He just knew"

ANDERSON: We'd start shooting at 6 a.m., and Tom would be out running an hour or two before that.

SBARGE: Tom was trying to lose weight from having been in *The Outsiders*. He was running in one of those rubber suits, trying to get down to a normal size.

AVNET: We were playing softball before filming began, and Tom broke a finger. He didn't say anything, because he was worried it might interrupt the shoot schedule.

ANDERSON: The guy was a machine.

ARMSTRONG: Tom was focused and ambitious. This was a huge thing for him. He was serious about it. I didn't get it because I thought he should be hanging out more. I was always just a "learn your lines and do it" actor, and then go to the bar. One night Tom told me, "I have to go prepare for an early shoot, and I also want to do some Bible reading before I go to bed." It was said very seriously, but now that I look back on it, I'm not sure how much of it was a joke.

SARAH PARTRIDGE (Kessler, the babysitter): I felt a tap on the shoulder, I turned around, and he said, "Kessler, I'm Joel," and he gave me that smile. I was completely taken. I don't think anyone has ever hit me that hard with natural charisma. The "get off the babysitter" scene where Tom and I are kissing on a table, I was thinking, I can't believe this! I said to Tom at one point, "I'm in a play in Chicago, if you want to come see it." It was a play called *E/R* from the Organic Theater Company. He came to the show one night, and we went out afterwards. I had my first sushi dinner with Tom. We went dancing, then said a very cordial but sweet goodbye, because he had to get up early and go to the set the next day. But at that point, I had a complete crush on him.

PANTOLIANO: On set, we were all in honey wagons – little trailers that have a toilet. I mean, small! Serial killers get more room in San Quentin. That's probably the last time Tom Cruise ever set foot in a honey wagon. I remember him telling me that he was going to be a big movie star, and I was thinking, Well, that takes a lot of guts.

PINCHOT: Once we were having ice cream sundaes, and Tom said, “I’ve got a sweet tooth, and I have to watch it. I gain weight.” I said, “Oh, lots of people do.” He said, “Really? Like stars? Like Al Pacino?” And I remember thinking, You don’t need to be worrying about Al Pacino level. That’s how [his ambition] came out – innocently. But that’s where he was pointed. He knew he was going to be a gigantic movie star. He wasn’t arrogant about it. He just knew.

RICHARD MASUR (Bill Rutherford, Princeton recruiter): The first time that fucking [Bob Seger’s “Old Time Rock and Roll”] song came on and Tom went sliding across the screen, I just went, Who the fuck is this?

BRICKMAN: Tom and I went to the set by ourselves on a Sunday. We got silly, tried a bunch of moves, and had a lot of laughs. Our first attempt for the opening was to have Tom spring into frame from a trampoline off camera. That was too ridiculous, even for us. As a kid, I always loved sliding around the house in socks, so we gave it a try, and Tom nailed it.

AVNET: When Tom came into frame the first time, what happened was he didn’t slide real well, so they worked on the socks and the floor slickness.

BRICKMAN: The Seger song provided the needed energy, a useful intro, and a fun lip-synch. But most importantly, in a slightly retro mode, I considered it to be timeless.

DAMBRA: When you’re doing stuff like that, you never know how big it’s gonna be. It’s just another day at the office.

BRICKMAN: I think there’s a universal connection to that scene. People respond to that sense of freedom for a moment that’s so exuberant and so much fun.

AVNET: It really captures the adolescent joy of having the house to yourself.

> “Tom and Rebecca were having an affair on the set. Everybody knew it. When the trailer was jumping, you weren’t supposed to go knock.”

VI

“My God, they’re naked”

PINCHOT: When Tom and Rebecca shot the first sex scene, where the leaves blow in through the French doors, the filmmakers closed the set. Even the script supervisor came off the set saying, “My God, they’re naked – and they’re *really* doing it.” That’s when Shera Danese, who played the call girl Vicki, got the devil on her shoulder. She said, “We’re going to find a way in there to watch!” We climbed up the set and looked over the top.

DE MORNAY: I was completely in the moment and feeling a sense of power as I walked in the room in character. I felt that this was Lana’s arena. And I was game for some risky business.

PINCHOT: Rebecca was drinking white wine to mellow her out. She was in these high heels, and then she inched off her underwear with her thumbs – but they got tangled in her shoes! It was supposed to be sexy and elegant, but she was tangled up. I started to laugh so hard that I shook the set, and then the assistant director came over and I felt this vise grip on my Achilles tendon. He was like, “I need to get you off this fucking set!” and hauled us out. Shera and I were limp with laughter. I respected Rebecca very much. I was also a horny 23-year-old not that far removed from the horny 17-year-old I was playing.

SBARGE: The chemistry you feel coming off the screen between Tom and Rebecca was very real.

CANDACE COLLINS JORDAN (call girl): Tom and Rebecca were having an affair on the set. Everybody knew it. When the trailer was jumping, you weren’t supposed to go knock.

SBARGE: At some point, Harry Dean Stanton was not so intent on Rebecca spending so much time with Tom.

DE MORNAY: I was in a relationship with Harry at the time and feeling drawn to Tom. We were very attracted to each other, which made the love scenes not unpleasant. Tom and I started to feel ourselves in our roles a lot. I’m trained in Method acting, and Tom was untrained, but he naturally becomes his roles. So at the beginning, there was sort of an antipathy that I felt toward him, honestly, and slowly feelings developed.

PARTRIDGE: They were filming downtown at the Drake Hotel one day, which was literally two blocks from my apartment. So I walked over to say hi, and I was looking for Tom, who was busy. Bronson came up and goes, “Well, he and Rebecca are now officially together.” And I was like, “What?” It broke my heart.

VII

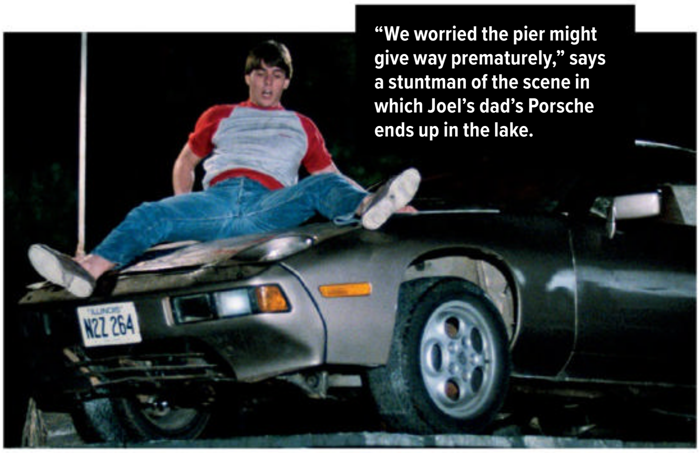
“That’s actually Sean Penn in the car”

ARMSTRONG: *Bad Boys* was also shooting in Chicago, and they had to halt production because Sean Penn broke his ankle. So Sean wound up moving into Tom's room at the hotel, and he was there for ages. Normally, Tom, being Joel Goodsen, kept his room very neat and tidy. Suddenly, when Sean moved in, it became totally chaotic.

SBARGE: Sean was playing a hoodlum in *Bad Boys*, and he had gotten an actual tattoo for the character. He was in character all the time, which made him a bit scary to be around. One night we were at the hotel's restaurant, and he lit a napkin on fire, then took one of those little paper doilies and literally made a little bonfire right there at the table. The waitress came and threw water on it, like, "What are you doing?"

ARMSTRONG: Sean wanted to drive Joel's dad's Porsche, and he found an opportunity.

SBARGE: When the car is backing out of the driveway and stalls? That's actually Sean Penn in the car.



"We worried the pier might give way prematurely," says a stuntman of the scene in which Joel's dad's Porsche ends up in the lake.

IMAGE SOURCE: THE CRITERION COLLECTION

ARMSTRONG: The car's engine conks out – that was a mistake. And then Sean started it up again. Paul realized after the fact, Oh, this is a happy accident. He used Jeff Beck's "The Pump" underneath it, stopping the music when the engine stalled, which is just a brilliant use of music.

LeFEVOUR: The Porsche 928 the film bought had been in a wreck and had no second gear. It was supposed to be used for all the stunts, but it was always in the shop. We got Tom a rental Porsche with an automatic transmission because he didn't know how to drive a stick. We ended up doing most of the car chase with that one. I was driving the Porsche along Lake Shore Drive with Rebecca hanging out of the window while Guido was chasing us. Then there was a Porsche shell with no motor in it. That's the car that actually went into the lake.

AVNET: For the scene where the Porsche rolls down a hill onto a dock that collapses into Lake Michigan, we had to build a stunt dock at Belmont Harbor. There are a lot of things I can't tell you about how I got that location.

BRICKMAN: Finally, after months of work, they gave us three nights to build and shoot. The problem was, I came back from another location to check on the dock they were building, and the production designer had put it in the wrong place – and the clock was ticking.

AVNET: The production designer had chosen an area where there wasn't a hill for the Porsche to roll down.

BRICKMAN: Avnet had to get them to work all night to disassemble the dock they had just built and move it to the proper location.

AVNET: Paul was angry, but Paul never yells at anybody. He's not a traditional Hollywood asshole. I said, "I have no idea how, but we're going to get it done." It was really a nightmare.

BRICKMAN: The first night we were supposed to shoot the scene, it rained. That was a dead night. The second night, it rained again. So on the last night, we did three nights of shooting in a single night. It was freezing cold. We had garbage bins with big fires right off camera, so the cast could race over after their takes and warm up.

LeFEVOUR: Tom was in front of the car as it's rolling down the hill, and I told him, "Just don't get your feet under the wheels." He sold the stunt great. Tom was a good athlete. He had been a wrestler in high school. I'm in the driver's seat with a black cloth covering me so you can't see me. I had my foot on the brake, just easing the car down to the dock. And then Tom jumped on the hood. That's all him to the last beat when the car comes to the very end of the dock. We worried the pier might give way prematurely, because we'd built it to collapse.

AVNET: It was a little bit dangerous. Tom would've gone in the water with the Porsche.

BRICKMAN: We didn't get a chance to test that dock. I wasn't sure when it was going to collapse.

LeFEVOUR: When they pulled the release pins out from the hinges under the water, they had a tow truck pulling the cable that took out the pier pilings, almost like a weak knee. The columns buckled, the pier gave way, and the car went right in. It was one take and done. For the scene after that – where they go to the mechanic with the Porsche and the guy asks, "Who's the U-boat commander?" – the filmmakers bought a bunch of trout from a trout farm and put them in the car, so that when the doors opened, like 30 fish came flooding out.

VIII

"It was truly a party"

SBARGE: For the house party scene, the filmmakers were using a Steadicam, moving through the crowd. We were on the sound stage during a blistering hot and humid Chicago summer. There was loud music, a lot of very provocatively dressed women, and lots of shooting the shit.

JORDAN: It wasn't like the director would say, “You stand here and hold this drink and laugh.” It was truly a party. People were mixing and mingling and having fun.

ANDERSON: Tom would bring his big boom box to the set with all his cassette tapes. He was always playing Springsteen or something to get the actors and extras riled up.

JORDAN: The women who played the call girls – many of us knew each other because we were models from around Chicago. Megan Mullally was also one of the girls. The first time you met her, you knew she was going to be big.

VIVIAN VICTOR (call girl): The filmmakers picked me and my girlfriends from the *Playboy* models portfolio. I was at the top of the stairs coming down in a pink teddy, and the director was shooting up – so I actually had a crotch shot in a movie before Sharon Stone.

PINCHOT: Jon Avnet grabbed me and said, “We're going to do a scene. You just open the door and let the call girls in, and I'll shoot it.” So I opened the door, and I reacted to all of the women coming in, and he said, “Perfect! That's it!” And I said, “Oh, I can do much better.” He said, “I'm sure you *cannot*.”

ARMSTRONG: Bronson is an astounding improviser. The scene where they're putting Joel's parents' house back together after the party, they're placing all of these knickknacks on a shelf, and Bronson says something to the effect of, “No, no, no. That doesn't go there. You can't mix centuries!”

> “Tom, Rebecca, and I had gone out to dinner the night before the film came out, and I had told them, ‘Your lives are going to change radically now.’”

MASUR: The Princeton admissions interview scene in the den [during the house party] with Tom and me – Paul saw it as a pivotal scene, and he was very insecure about whether or not it was going to play. He said, “I don't think the scene works. It's just clunky.” I said, “Well, I'm being shitty to Joel with no sugarcoating. What if I say to Joel that we're going to go over his résumé? I'll read aloud these totally lame things he's put on his application: recording secretary of the Spanish club, things like that – stuff that's not getting anyone into Princeton. Let me be slimy with him.” Paul really liked that, and that's what the scene became. At the end of it, Tom slaps me on the knee and says, “You know, Bill, there's one thing I've learned in all my years. Sometimes you gotta say, ‘What the fuck,’ make your move.” The knee slap was an ad-lib. Tom just did that. And I look at him like, “Are you fucking kidding?” At the end of the house party sequence, there's a moment where you see me leave with one of the call girls – a tall, breathtaking blonde. That wasn't in the script. I told Paul, “The way to set up Joel getting into Princeton at the end of the film is to have me leave with one of the girls.” Paul was like, “Wow, yeah, that's a great idea.”

AVNET: The scene we didn't quite get done on time was the first in the film – the shower dream scene. We shot it after the wrap party. That was a complicated one.

FRANCINE LOCKE (girl in Joel's shower dream): The shower was built inside the gymnasium along with the other interiors of Joel's house. In the scene, which is Joel's dream, the hallway to the shower appears to lengthen as he walks toward it, so he never reaches the shower. But it wasn't the hallway that was moving; it was a shower that was on wheels, and as Tom Cruise began walking into the bathroom, they pulled the shower back. There was an eight-gallon water heater attached to the shower – and eight gallons didn't last long. The steam you see was actually mineral oil vapor made with a diffuser. It was not a nice, warm shower. It was cold, and it was awkward. It was an 18-hour shoot. I never thought anybody would even recognize me, because by the end I looked like a drowned rat. On the last take, Tom was like, “Just go with me on this.” He made sure it would be the last take, because he kept on walking, opened the shower door, and got in, the water flowing all over his letterman jacket. So I can say I actually took a shower with Tom Cruise.

IX

“It came across as pornographic”

DE MORNAY: When the movie was over, I went back to Los Angeles, and Tom went back to New York. One day I got a call from Tom. He said, “So do you want to meet me for coffee? I'm in L.A. Let's see what we would feel if we just met each other off the street.” The relationship took off. And then Paul realized he didn't like the love scene on the train. He got the money to go back to Chicago and reshoot. Tom and I were in the full flush of a relationship. How often is a camera taking a movie of you simulating a love scene while you're actually in love?

CHEW: If you look at the original screenplay, the scene was very vague. Paul had written, “Unrestrained passion against a window of exaggerated romantic imagery (to be devised).” He didn't have a plan for how to shoot it to make it erotic.

BRICKMAN: Jon and I went to an Italian restaurant in Chicago one night that had the worst service I've ever had in my life. We were there for about three and a half hours. Out of that dinner, we came up with the initial concept of the flying train – an homage to a scene in *The Conformist*. It had Joel and Lana in a single CTA train car that at some point leaves the tracks and flies over Chicago. We shot it, but failed to execute it very well. It came across as pornographic. The film slipped into literal fantasy and became ridiculously romanticized.

CHEW: It was as if he was trying to be Michelangelo Antonioni or Fellini. It did not belong because the rest of the picture is more naturalistic.

AVNET: It was way too explicit. There was no mystery. The sensuality that ultimately took place wasn't there. So Paul and I huddled, and I said, "They need obstacles. It's too easy for them to get on the train and make love. The anticipation is probably as powerful as anything."

CHEW: In his rewriting for the additional shooting, Paul realized he wanted to build up to Joel and Lana being alone on the train. He added people to the train. Brilliantly, Paul got the wino homeless guy in there as the last remaining passenger, and the really nice touch of Joel escorting the guy off the train and compassionately covering him with a jacket. That was so Joel Goodsen.

AVNET: We reshot it, but when we put it together, it was mediocre. It didn't transcend into something that had a meaning outside of two people making love on a train. We still needed something that created sensuality and some style.

CHEW: I started to play around with different speed changes, in order to take us out of real time by slowing down the footage. In my mind, it was bookending what was established at the beginning with the shower dream sequence.

AVNET: Paul was using *Music for 18 Musicians*, the Steve Reich composition, as temp music, and Richard was creating a strobe effect. I said, "Look how sensual it is, particularly when Tom leans back and opens his mouth. Look how the Steve Reich plays with the sense of motion from a train." This was before we went to Berlin to work with Tangerine Dream on the score.

BRICKMAN: Initially we sent some film to Tangerine Dream, and they came back with their first pass. It was clear they were trying to write music to a typical teen movie. The chord changes were like '50s and '60s teenage rock, and that's not the direction I was trying to go. That's when we got on a plane and went to Berlin. We hung out in Tangerine Dream's studio for 10 days and knocked out the score with them. They worked in an old church. We'd start work around dinnertime and work through the night every night.

AVNET: The first seven days, we got nothing useful. We were quite panicky. Then the eighth day, Edgar Froese comes in with a two-inch tape and plays "Love on a Real Train," and we go, "Bingo!"

X

"The battle over the ending"

BRICKMAN: I got very close to achieving what I wanted to achieve for the first time, then the football was taken away from me like Charlie Brown and Lucy.

AVNET: The battle over the ending was very disappointing. David felt that a more glib, upbeat ending was more commercial, and Paul and I were fighting for the integrity of the film. It was very tough on Paul.

BRICKMAN: In my original ending [a farewell-feeling dinner scene], everything gets flipped around totally. Lana is in control for most of the film, then Joel sees how vulnerable this young girl is and his heart goes out to her.

AVNET: Lana says, "Why does it have to be so tough?" She's never let her guard down in any way like that. Paul's ending is so beautiful. Is it down? Well, yeah, it is much less buoyant than the theatrical ending [which shortens the dinner scene and adds a park scene that nods to a continued relationship]. What David wanted subverted the meaning of the movie.

BRICKMAN: It's a small tonal thing, but it was very important for me to pull the themes of the film together. I fought like a madman to preserve the ending.

AVNET: David was saying, "I'll bring in a television director to finish it." What I had said to Paul was, "By all means, stay with the film. Don't let David beat you down so badly that you abandon it. Because you have to minimize the damage." Paul had to write the new ending. The whole experience was brutal.

CHEW: We had a screening where we had two theaters with two audiences looking at the two versions. It was the only movie I've ever worked on where I had to put together two versions.

AVNET: The new ending tested a bit better – five or six points. It was enough that the argument David was making was not nuts or spurious. It was really disappointing to Paul.

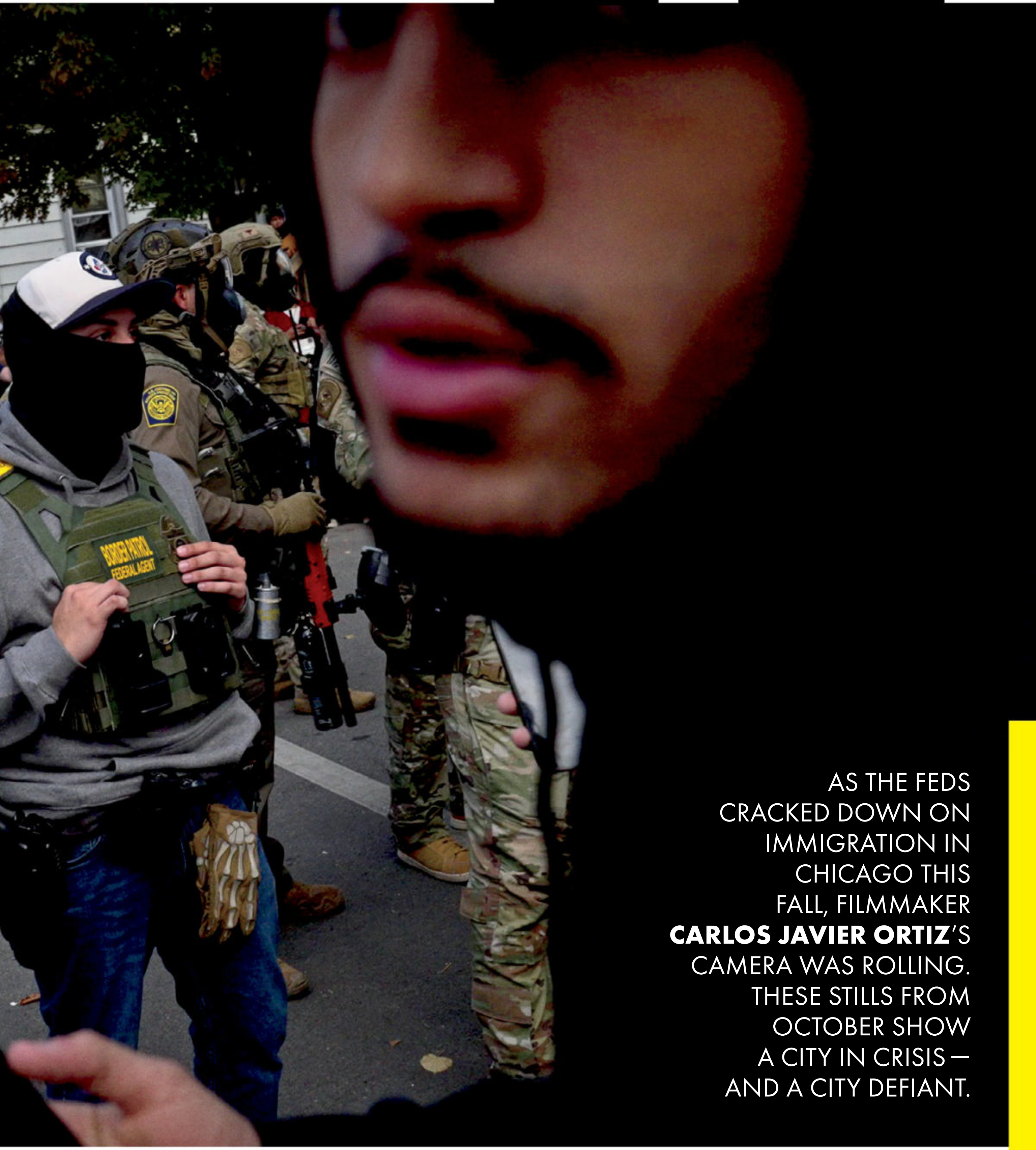
DE MORNAY: We were very against it, Tom and I. We both really wanted it to stay true to Paul's vision, but we had no choice.

BRICKMAN: I felt the film went out in a weaker form, and it really bothered me. Due to the dispute, our cast-and-crew screening was canceled. There was no premiere. The film opened in about 700 theaters. I got a call from Geffen. He said, "It's a hit." Tom, Rebecca, and I had gone out to dinner the night before the film came out, and I had told them, "Your lives are going to change radically now. I hope it's what you want." Unrelenting adoration can really twist you in some strange ways. It's crazy to think that one day I was sitting in a cabin thinking of these lines of dialogue, and a few years later, these young lives were profoundly changed. C

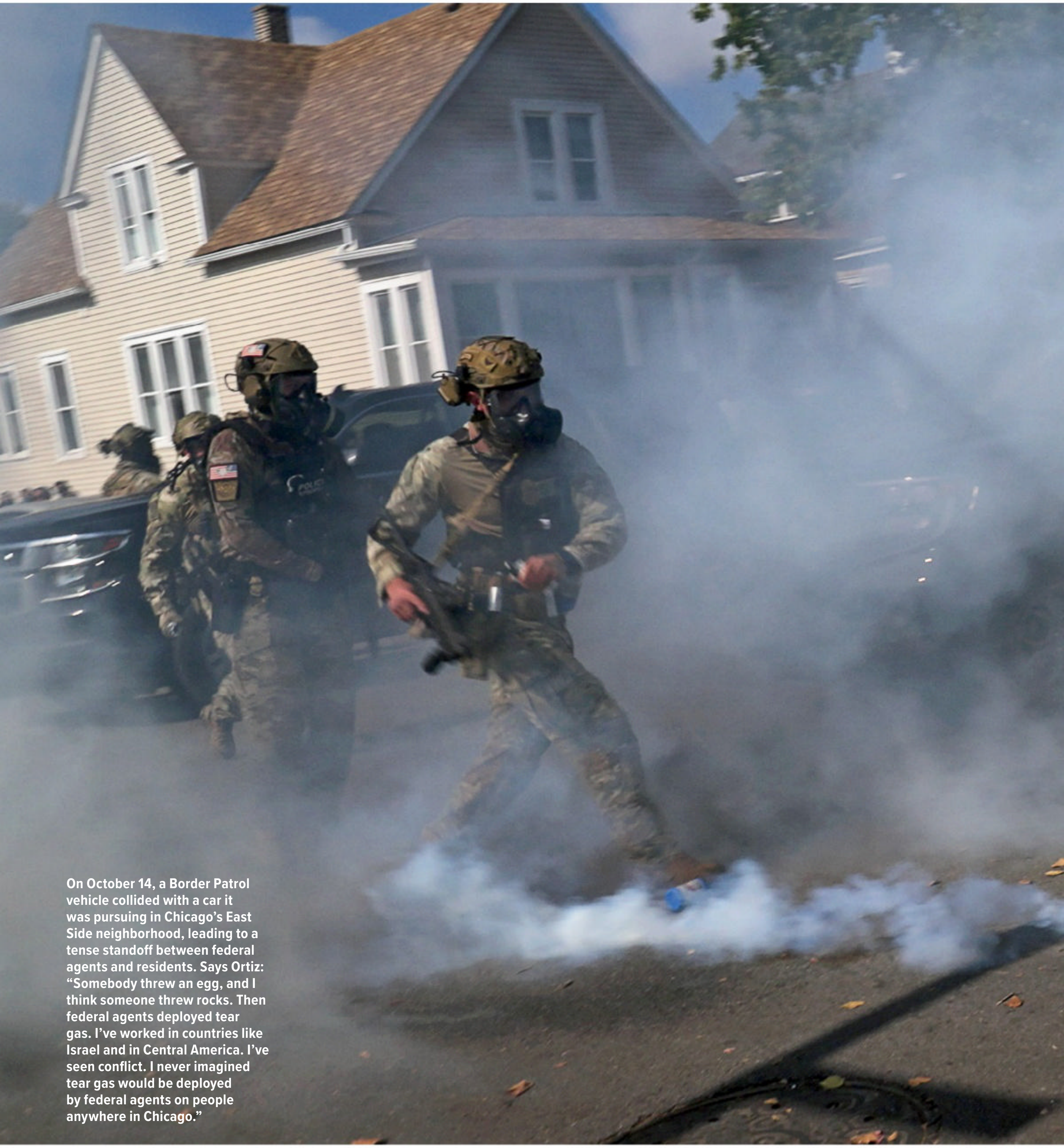
Scenes

POLICE
POLICE

From the Occupation


BORDER PATROL
FEDERAL AGENT

AS THE FEDS CRACKED DOWN ON IMMIGRATION IN CHICAGO THIS FALL, FILMMAKER **CARLOS JAVIER ORTIZ**'S CAMERA WAS ROLLING. THESE STILLS FROM OCTOBER SHOW A CITY IN CRISIS— AND A CITY DEFIANT.



On October 14, a Border Patrol vehicle collided with a car it was pursuing in Chicago's East Side neighborhood, leading to a tense standoff between federal agents and residents. Says Ortiz: "Somebody threw an egg, and I think someone threw rocks. Then federal agents deployed tear gas. I've worked in countries like Israel and in Central America. I've seen conflict. I never imagined tear gas would be deployed by federal agents on people anywhere in Chicago."

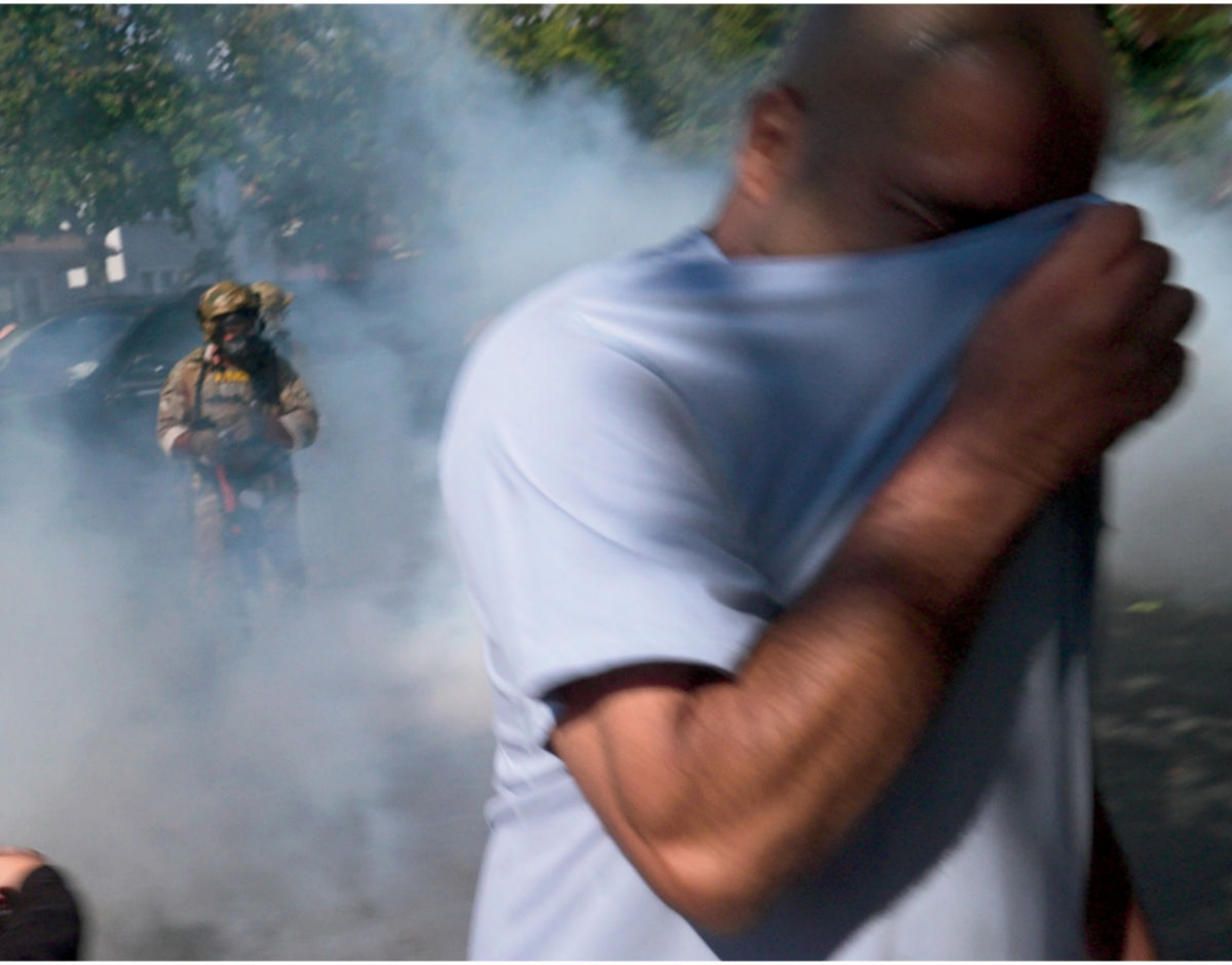
Once it became known that the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement facility in west suburban Broadview was being used as a detention center, protesters began gathering there routinely. Says Ortiz: “Broadview has become the place to stand up and react to the action that’s taking place. This night the Border Patrol and ICE agents came out and dispersed the crowd. It was heavy. They told people to ‘move, move, move,’ and then started shooting pepper balls and tear gas.”

B147
POLICE

when we win

BY JOSÉ OLIVAREZ

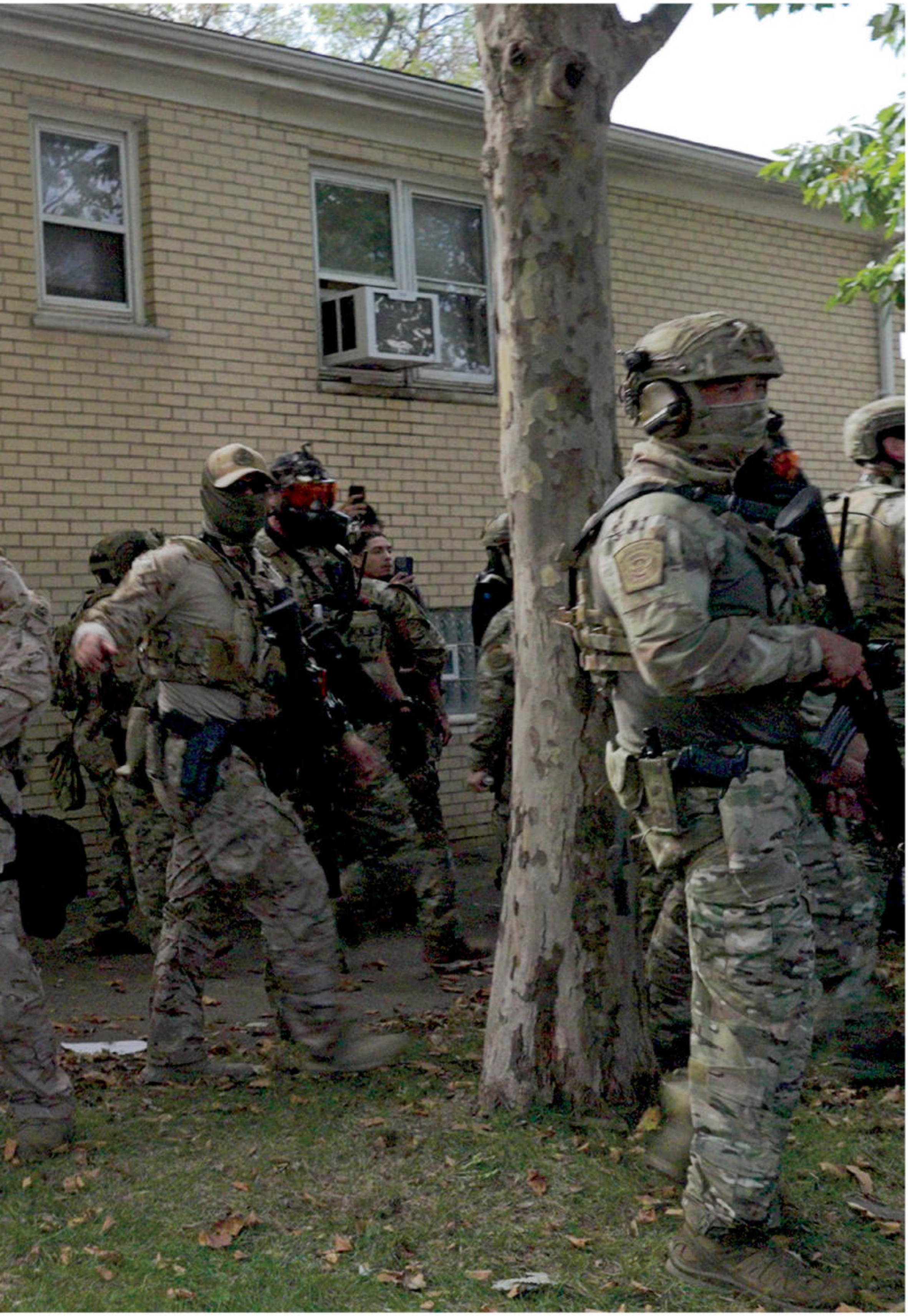
the masked agents raid our neighborhoods.
what do they cover up? (yesterday) is their promise
& their charge. on 75th and South Shore they ram down
our doors using (yesterday). they toss canisters
of (yesterday) into our children's lullabies. why?
my people,
we carry (today) & (tomorrow) in twin holsters. we
plant (today) & (tomorrow) in our gardens. every day
there are more sprouts. let it be known: Chicago
will never cower. (yesterday) already died. (yesterday)
is dying. (yesterday) will die again. there is no future
in (yesterday). the agents in our neighborhoods hide
their faces because they are losing. because they lost.
when we win,
there will be whistles from the gulls
circling Lake Michigan. let them sing it:
Chicago is a city of (today) & (tomorrow).
Chicago is the future.



“East Side, the neighborhood where this happened, is where all these factories, steel mills existed. European workers worked the mills, then Latinos, mostly Mexicans, worked the mills and raised their families there. I live not far from there, so when I saw on social media it was happening, I hopped on it.”

E 105th St
POLICE
¡VI
MEXI

"The East Side crowd was yelling at the agents, 'ICE go home, ICE go home'—that type of thing. The anger was so real. They were saying to the Latino agents, 'How can you do this? You're one of us.' What I'm seeing in every neighborhood is that everybody's becoming an activist. Because they have to."



“Somebody had thrown a tear gas canister back at the agents in East Side. That’s what they’re reacting to here. They’re shooting rubber bullets.”

“This is the aftermath from the night federal agents were pushing people from out of the front gates in Broadview. It was chaotic. I had a mask on, but you could still feel the burning tear gas. My skin and my face were irritated.”

"I didn't know what I needed, but together we figured it out."

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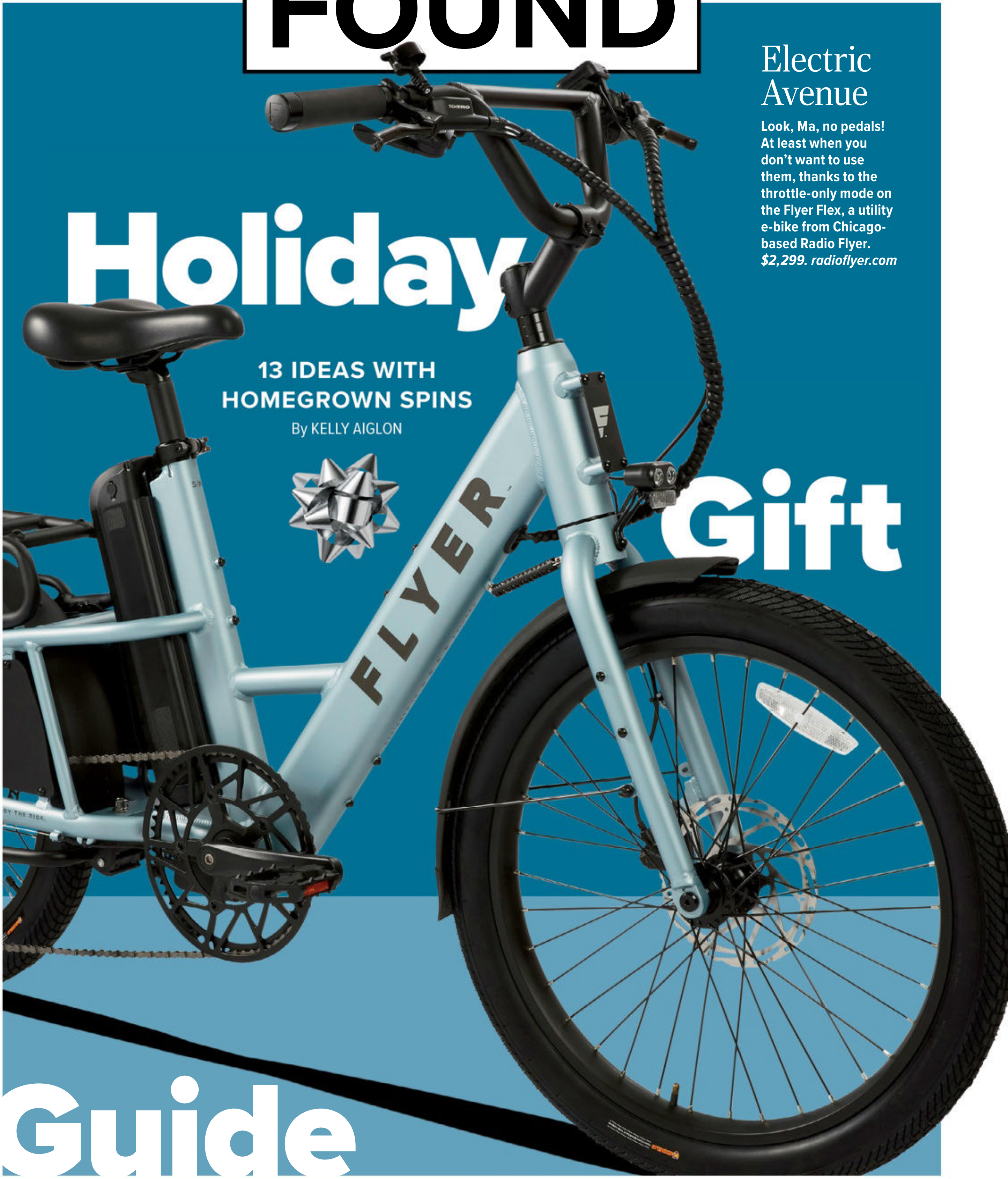
FOUND

Holiday Gift Guide

13 IDEAS WITH HOMEGROWN SPINS

By KELLY AIGLON

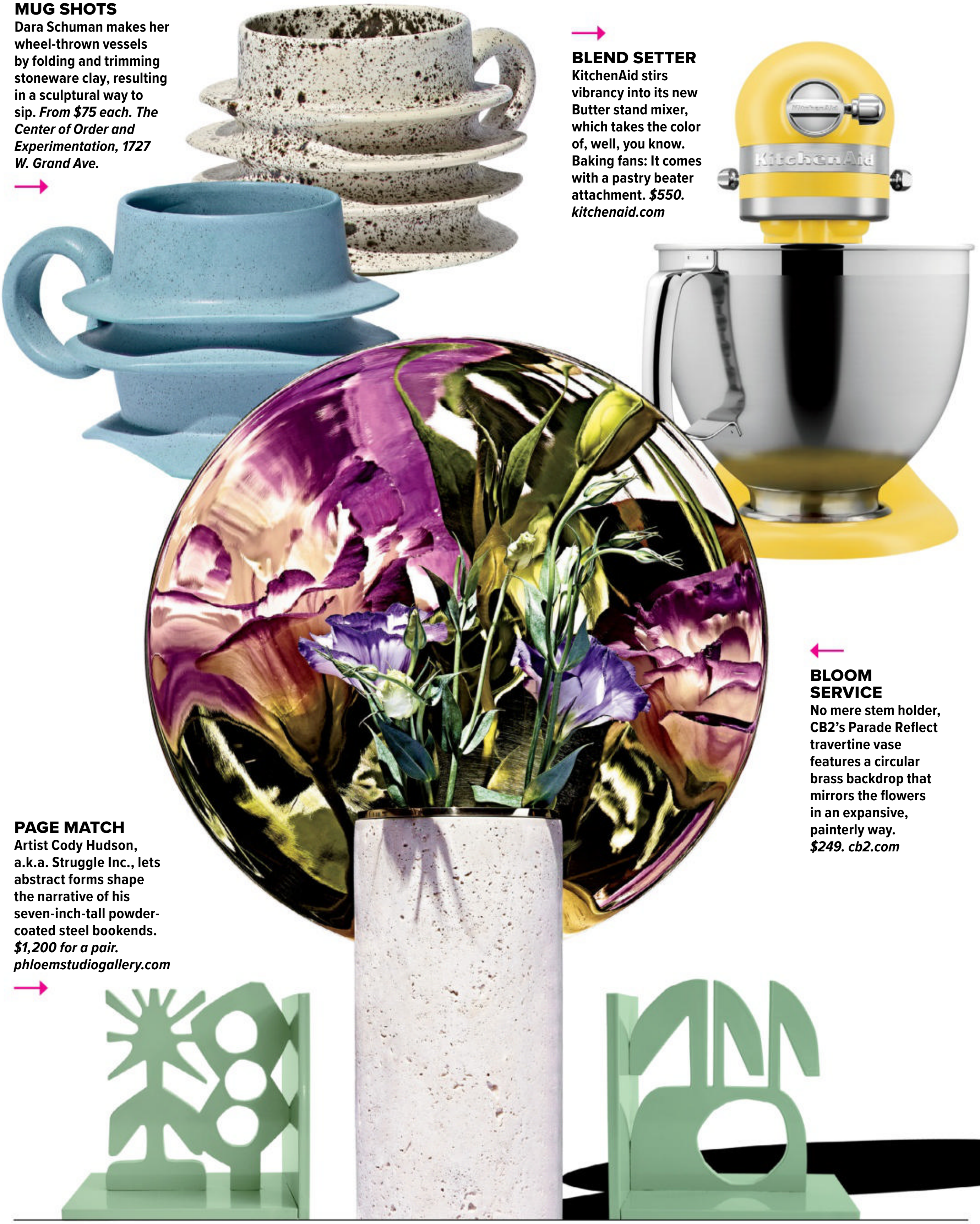


Electric Avenue

Look, Ma, no pedals! At least when you don't want to use them, thanks to the throttle-only mode on the Flyer Flex, a utility e-bike from Chicago-based Radio Flyer. ***$2,299. radioflyer.com***

MUG SHOTS

Dara Schuman makes her wheel-thrown vessels by folding and trimming stoneware clay, resulting in a sculptural way to sip. *From $75 each. The Center of Order and Experimentation, 1727 W. Grand Ave.*



BLEND SETTER

KitchenAid stirs vibrancy into its new Butter stand mixer, which takes the color of, well, you know. Baking fans: It comes with a pastry beater attachment. ***$550.*** *kitchenaid.com*

BLOOM SERVICE

No mere stem holder, CB2's Parade Reflect travertine vase features a circular brass backdrop that mirrors the flowers in an expansive, painterly way. ***$249.*** *cb2.com*

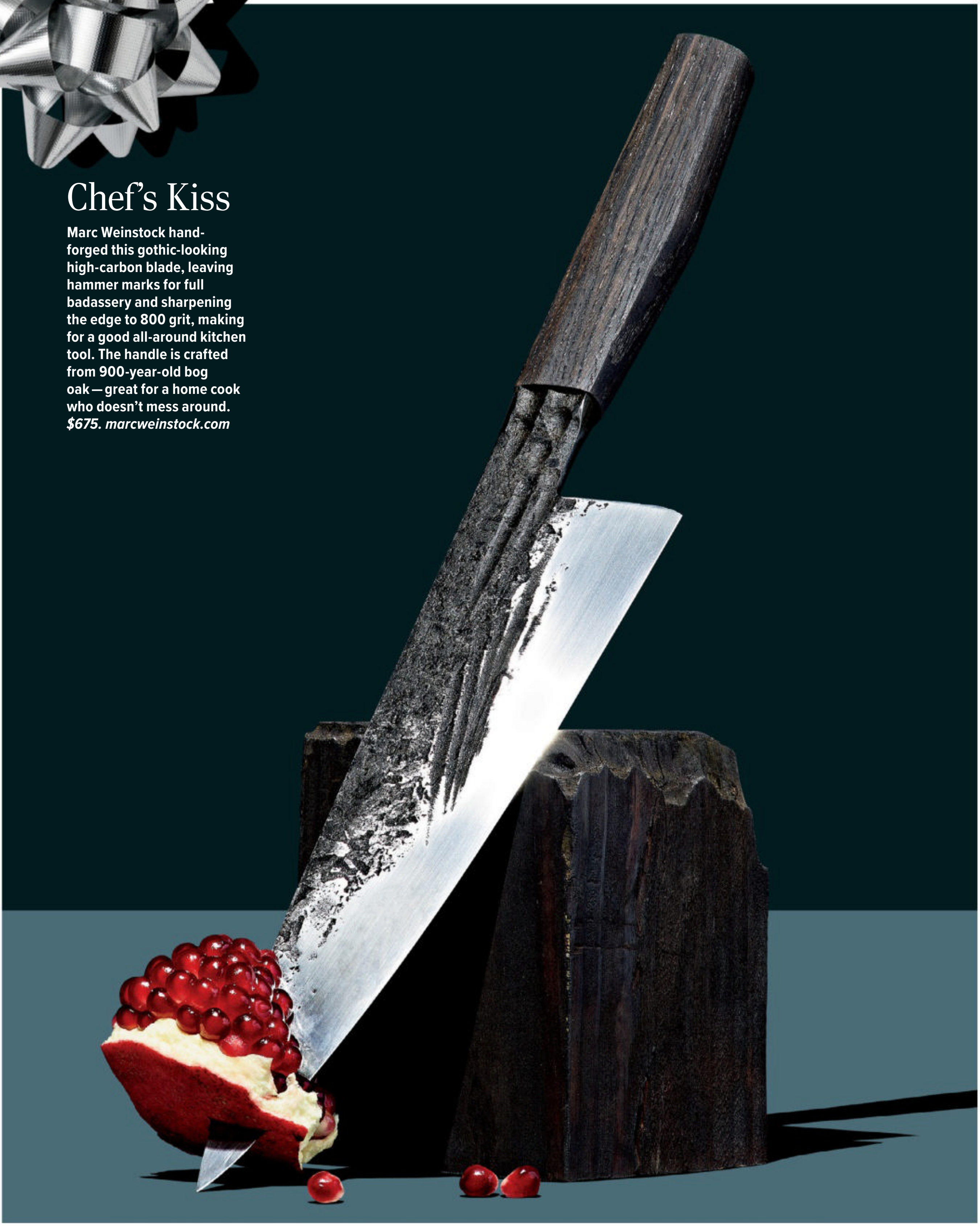
PAGE MATCH

Artist Cody Hudson, a.k.a. Struggle Inc., lets abstract forms shape the narrative of his seven-inch-tall powder-coated steel bookends. ***$1,200 for a pair.*** *phloemstudiogallery.com*

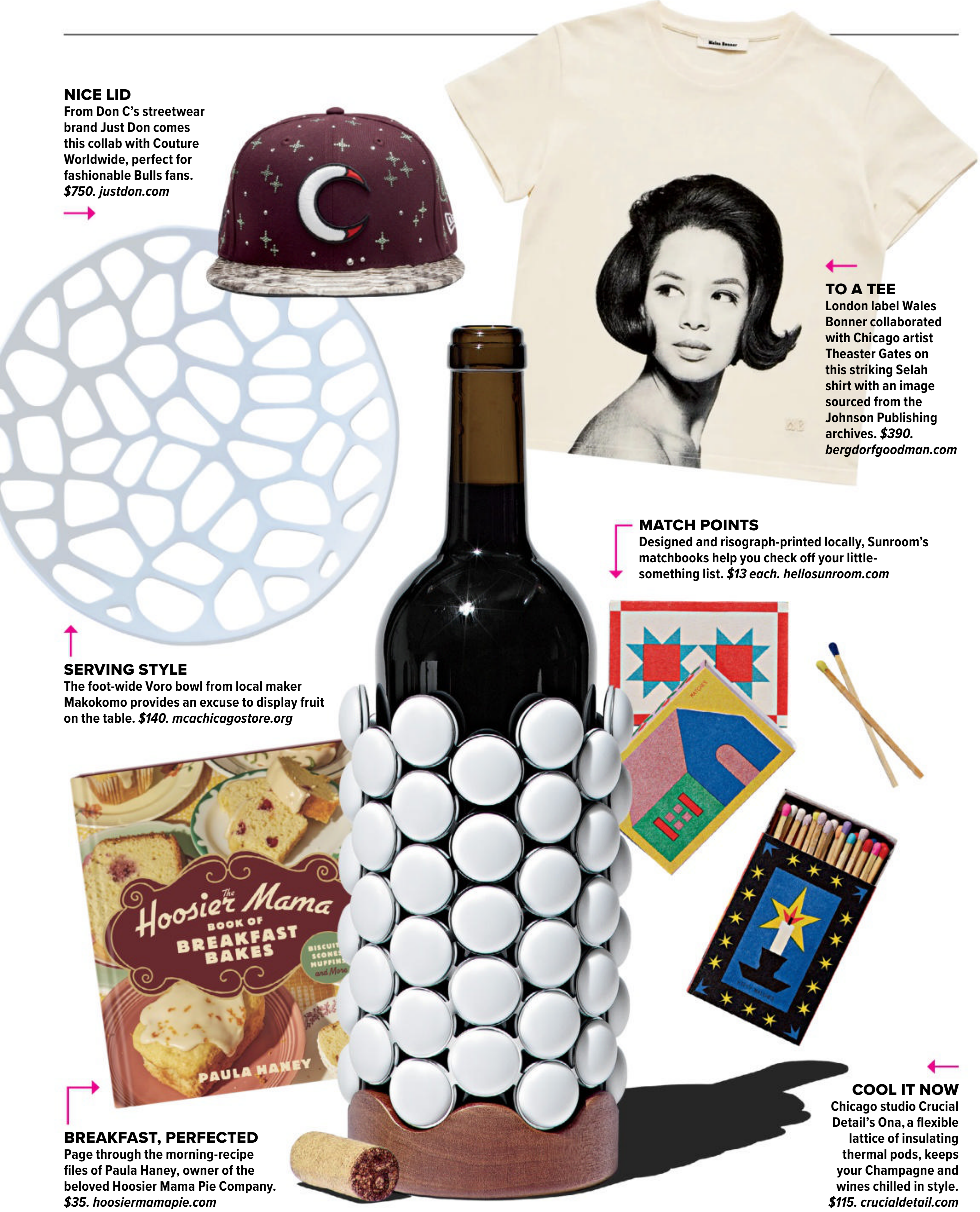
PHOTOGRAPHY: ((VASE, MUGS) CLINT BLOWERS; (ALL OTHERS AND BIKE ON PREVIOUS SPREAD) COURTESY OF VENDORS | STYLING: SEAN COSTELLO

Chef’s Kiss

Marc Weinstock hand-forged this gothic-looking high-carbon blade, leaving hammer marks for full badassery and sharpening the edge to 800 grit, making for a good all-around kitchen tool. The handle is crafted from 900-year-old bog oak—great for a home cook who doesn’t mess around. *$675. marcweinstock.com*



Photograph by CLINT BLOWERS



NICE LID
From Don C's streetwear brand Just Don comes this collab with Couture Worldwide, perfect for fashionable Bulls fans. *$750. justdon.com*

TO A TEE
London label Wales Bonner collaborated with Chicago artist Theaster Gates on this striking Selah shirt with an image sourced from the Johnson Publishing archives. *$390. bergdorfgoodman.com*

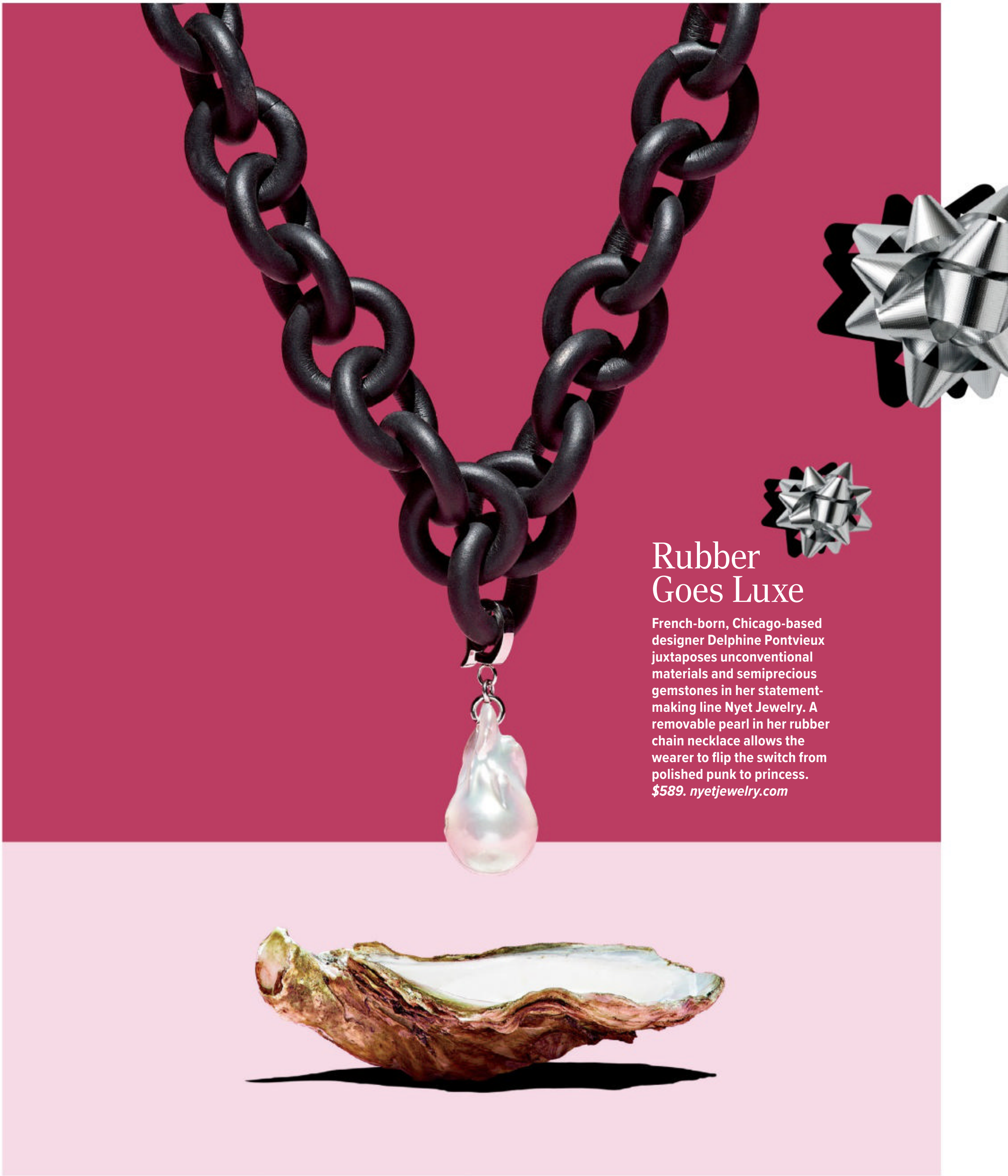
MATCH POINTS
Designed and risograph-printed locally, Sunroom's matchbooks help you check off your little-something list. *$13 each. hellosunroom.com*

SERVING STYLE
The foot-wide Voro bowl from local maker Makokomo provides an excuse to display fruit on the table. *$140. mcachicagostore.org*

BREAKFAST, PERFECTED
Page through the morning-recipe files of Paula Haney, owner of the beloved Hoosier Mama Pie Company. *$35. hoosiermamapie.com*

COOL IT NOW
Chicago studio Crucial Detail's Ona, a flexible lattice of insulating thermal pods, keeps your Champagne and wines chilled in style. *$115. crucialdetail.com*

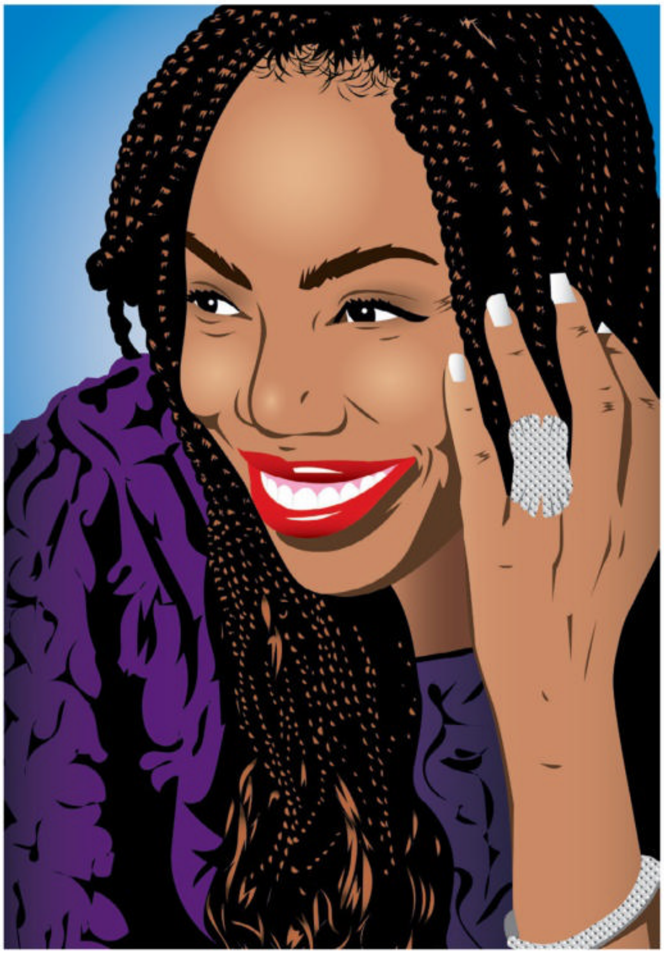
PHOTOGRAPHY: (WINE CHILLER & MATCHES) CLINT BLOWERS; (ALL OTHERS) COURTESY OF VENDORS | STYLING: SEAN COSTELLO



Rubber Goes Luxe

French-born, Chicago-based designer Delphine Pontvieux juxtaposes unconventional materials and semiprecious gemstones in her statement-making line Nyet Jewelry. A removable pearl in her rubber chain necklace allows the wearer to flip the switch from polished punk to princess. *$589. nyetjewelry.com*

Photograph by CLINT BLOWERS



Heather Headley

The Grammy and Tony winner, 51, on adulation addiction, performance jitters, and suburban life

Interview by MIKE THOMAS

■ **The stage, for me, has been a psychologist's couch.** I was the happiest in my life when I was doing *Aida*, because I cried through that show maybe three or four times a night. There's something cathartic about that. My son wants to be an actor, and I've been explaining to him that onstage you have to be vulnerable. You have to be ready to cry. You have to be ready to have spit flying out of your mouth and just be naked to some extent. The audience appreciates it.

■ **When I was leaving *Aida***, my future father-in-law, Johnny Musso – he's in the College Football Hall of Fame and played for the Bears – pulled me aside and said, "Have you prepared yourself? For the past five or six years, at 10:30 every night, people have stood and applauded you. I kind of know what that's like, running into a stadium. But in a couple weeks, you're not going to have that." And I said, "Yes, I'm good. I want the break." Two weeks later, I was like, I need an IV drip of applause.

■ **From early on, I was Heather, that girl who sings.** Or Heather, the Tony winner. Heather, the Grammy winner. That's how I'm defined. But if that adulation is the air you breathe, when it goes away, then, in essence, you're dead. You have to know who you are without it, and that has been a beautiful thing.

■ **"Service" has gotten a bad connotation**, but it's godly. When I was in England [doing *The Bodyguard* in the West End], I had a dresser named Jenni Carvell. It took me a while to accept it, but that woman became my lifeline. When I had bad days, Jenni would hold me up. Before I left my dressing room, Jenni would say, "Do you have everything? Do you have your nausea pills? Your water? Your tea?" She had, like, a contractor's belt with all the stuff I would need. I had 20-something changes, so every time I crossed the stage, Jenni would have to run behind the stage to get to the other side to make sure my dresses were ready. She would spend an hour beforehand setting everything up, making sure every zipper was right. It just taught me so much. This was not her being subservient. It was her saying: "I'm going to make sure that girl does her job well."

■ **I cannot tell you I've ever gone onstage in the past five or 10 years going, "I got this."** There's always something that keeps me off-kilter. Before I did the Kennedy Center, my ear monitors were not working. I remember walking out there scared to death. But my husband would tell you that some of my best performances were the ones where I'm having [*makes panic attack sounds*] backstage.

■ **One time I was talking to Elton John at his house in Atlanta.** And I remember saying, "You live here?" He told me he loved Atlanta because he could just be. He could go to the bookstores, he could go to the music stores. He's like, "OK, maybe they close them down after hours for me." But it was a community. At the time, I was young and didn't understand that. But now I get it. I feel like the Chicago burbs are that. You get to just be. If you ever come to the burbs and see me, I have no makeup on, I have my sweats, I'm at the gym, or I'm at Mariano's or Whole Foods trying to figure out which is a better sauce. C

Illustration by QUICKHONEY

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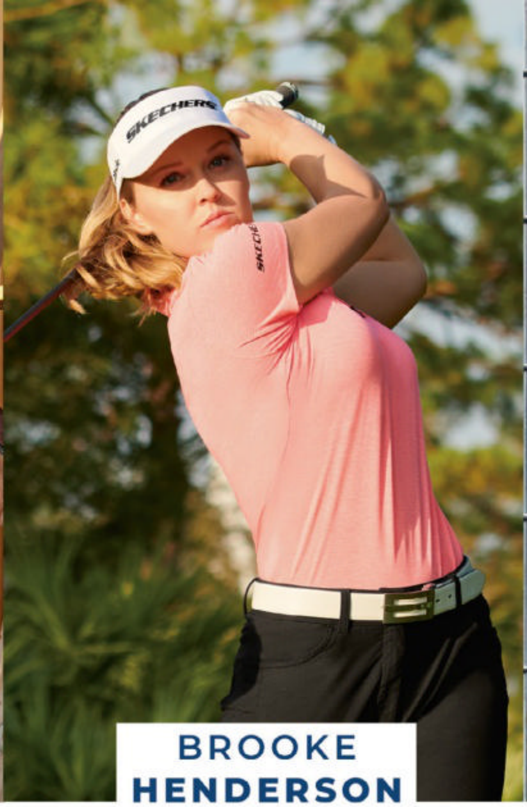
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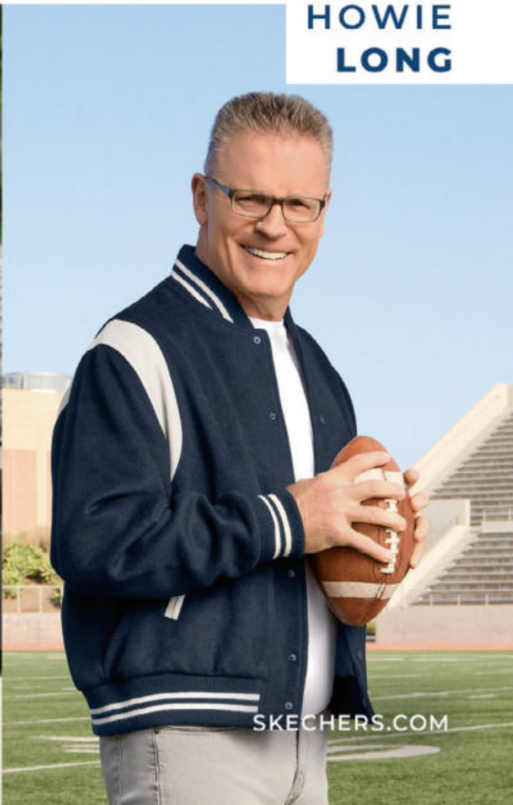
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